PLAY

DIRE STRAITS
LADY WRITER

BILL WITHERS
AIN'T NO SUNSHINE

WHITE REAPER
PINK SLIP

TOTAL Guitar

PLAY BETTER NOW!

LEARN TO PLAY
THIN LIZZY
WHISKEY IN THE JAR

JEFF BECK

INNOVATOR.
MAVERICK.
GENIUS.

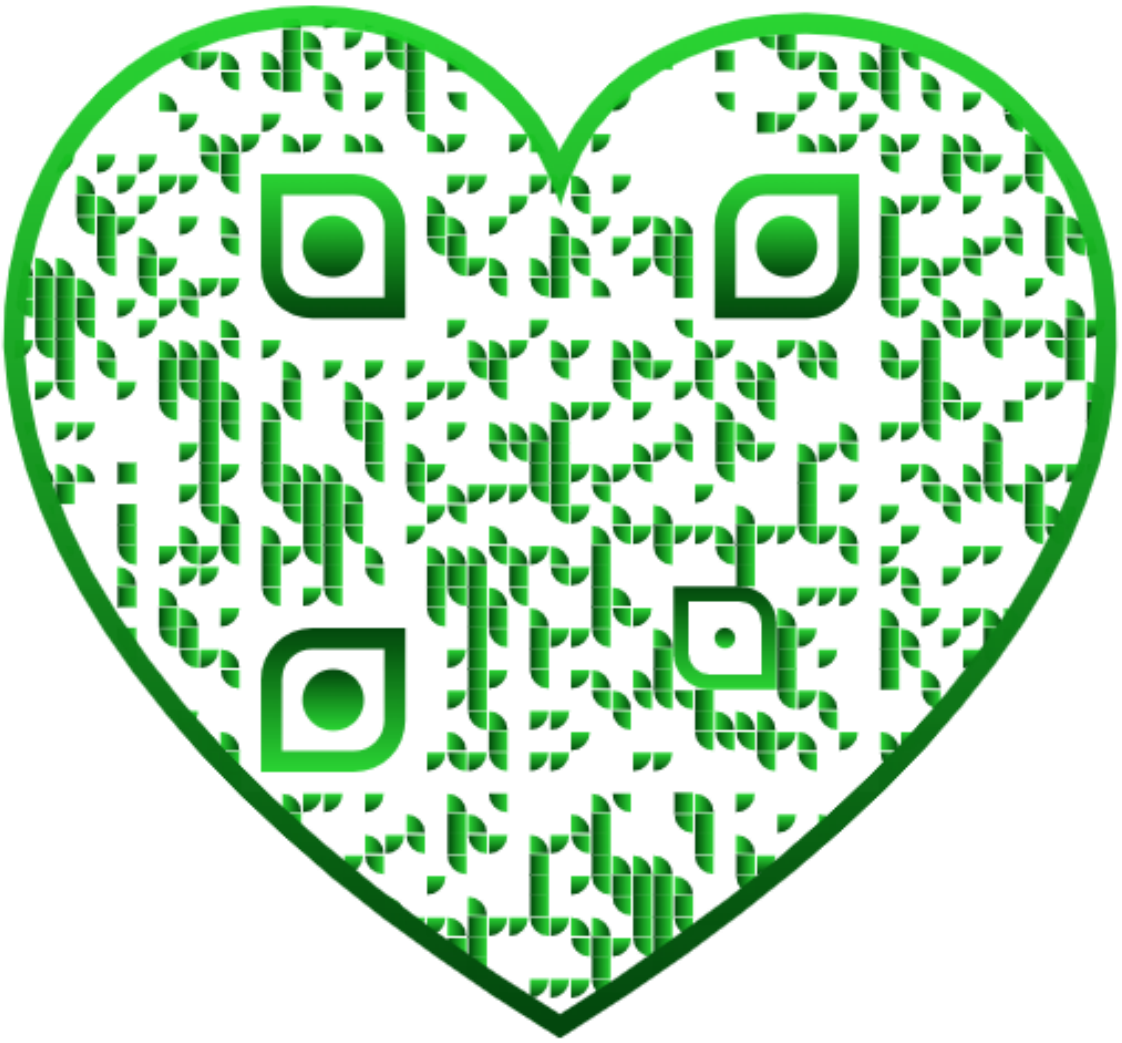
How he changed guitar music forever

With tributes from
JOE PERRY
CORY WONG
and more

38
RIFFS, LICKS AND SONGS TO LEARN

REVIEWED
FENDER'S NEW HOT-RODDED AERODYNE STRAT

PLUS
WOLFGANG VAN HALEN
STEVE VAI
INHALER



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QUAY HOUSE, THE AMBURY, BATH, BA1 1UA
Tel: 01225 442244 **Fax:** 01225 822763
Email: totalguitar@futurenet.com
Website: www.totalguitar.co.uk

EDITORIAL
Editor: Chris Bird
Group Art Director: Graham Dalzell
Senior Music Editor: Jason Sidwell
Content Editor: Paul Elliott
Production Editor: Stan Bull
Music Co-ordinators: Zoe Maughan, Natalie Beilby

CONTRIBUTORS
Stuart Williams, Jenna Scaramanga, Amit Sharma, Ellie Rogers, Rob Laing, Charlie Griffiths, Jono Harrison, Jon Bishop, Matt Owen, Damien Morris, Nick Guppy, Trevor Curwen
Music Engraver: Simon Troup and Jennie Troup
Photography: Barrie Wentzell, Neil Godwin, Olly Curtis, Phil Barker, Kevin Nixon

ADVERTISING
Phone: 01225 442244 **Fax:** 01225 732285
Chief Revenue Officer: Zach Sullivan, zach.sullivan@futurenet.com
UK Commercial Sales Director: Clare Dove, clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising Sales Director: Lara Jaggon, lara.jaggon@futurenet.com
Account Sales Directors: Alison Watson, alison.watson@futurenet.com
Guy Meredith, guy.meredith@futurenet.com

MARKETING
Head Of Marketing: Sharon Todd
Subscriptions Marketing Managers: Faith Wardle, Rachel Wallace

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION
Production Controller: Frances Twentyman
Head of Production UK & US: Mark Constance
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CIRCULATION
Trade Marketing Manager: Michelle Brock 0207 429 3683

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MANAGEMENT
Brand Director, Music: Stuart Williams
Head Of Design (Music): Brad Merrett
Content Director: Scott Rowley
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Welcome...

I feel slightly overwhelmed this month as it befalls to me to try and sum up the career of someone many would say is the best player ever to pick up our instrument: Jeff Beck, who sadly died in January. It's been said countless times by countless music journos and guitarists alike that Beck is 'the guitar hero's guitar hero'. This isn't hyperbole. When you can count Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Joe Perry and Brian May amongst your fans you must be doing something right.

Spend a little time analysing how Jeff plays and you start to understand. It seems to me that – particularly from the 1980s onwards – Jeff developed a playing style quite unlike anyone else's. A style that explodes in a fountain of technical wizardry, beautiful, unpredictable melodies and new sounds. I don't think the phrase 'it's all in the hands' applies to *anyone* more than it does to Jeff Beck.

For me, his remarkable genius as a primarily melodic player is his apparent inability to resort to guitary clichés. Though a fierce improviser, you'd almost never hear him employing widdly pentatonic "filler" licks or adding too many notes where fewer will suffice. No. The melody and the texture always win out with Jeff.

There's so much more I could say about this most creative of guitarists, but for now I'll direct you to p36 where you'll find our tribute to Jeff. We've profiled his career and spoken to some high-profile fans. And I hope that, like me, reading our feature, you feel inspired to follow our new lesson on the wondrous methods he employed.

The world of guitar music is well and truly in his debt.

Chris Bird Editor

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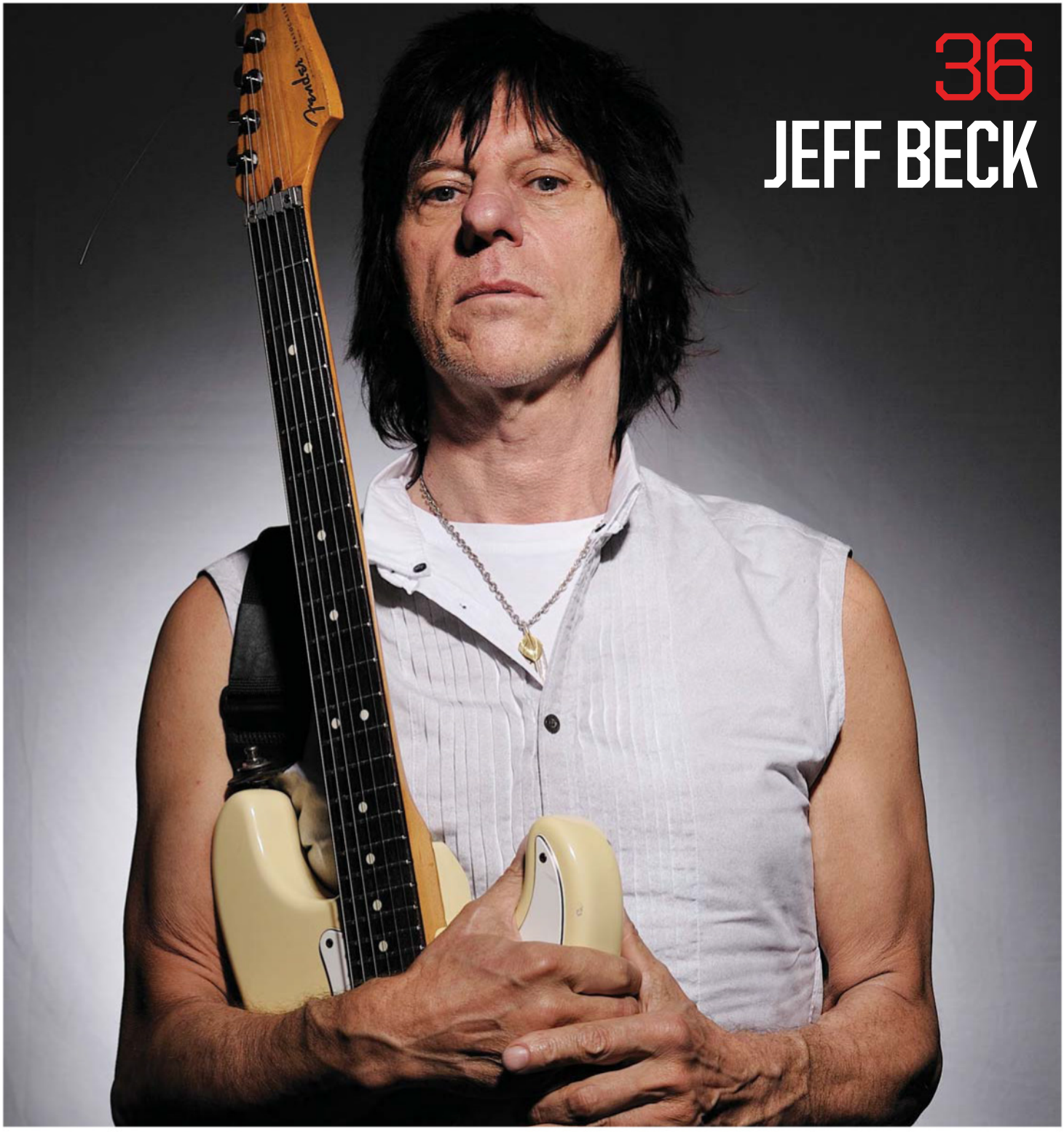

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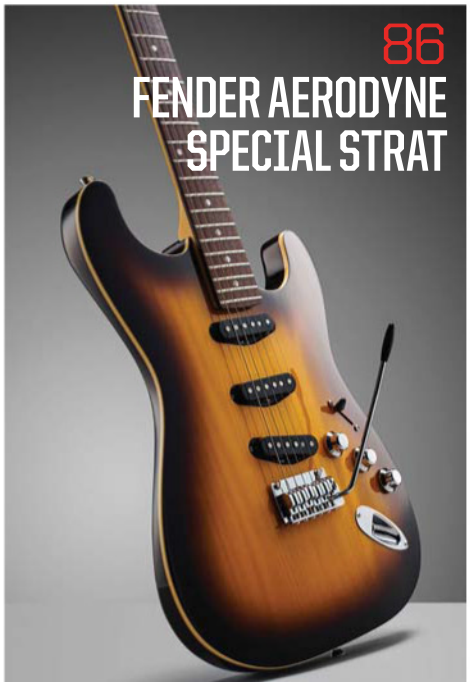
Cover image Barrie Wentzell



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V FOR VICTORY

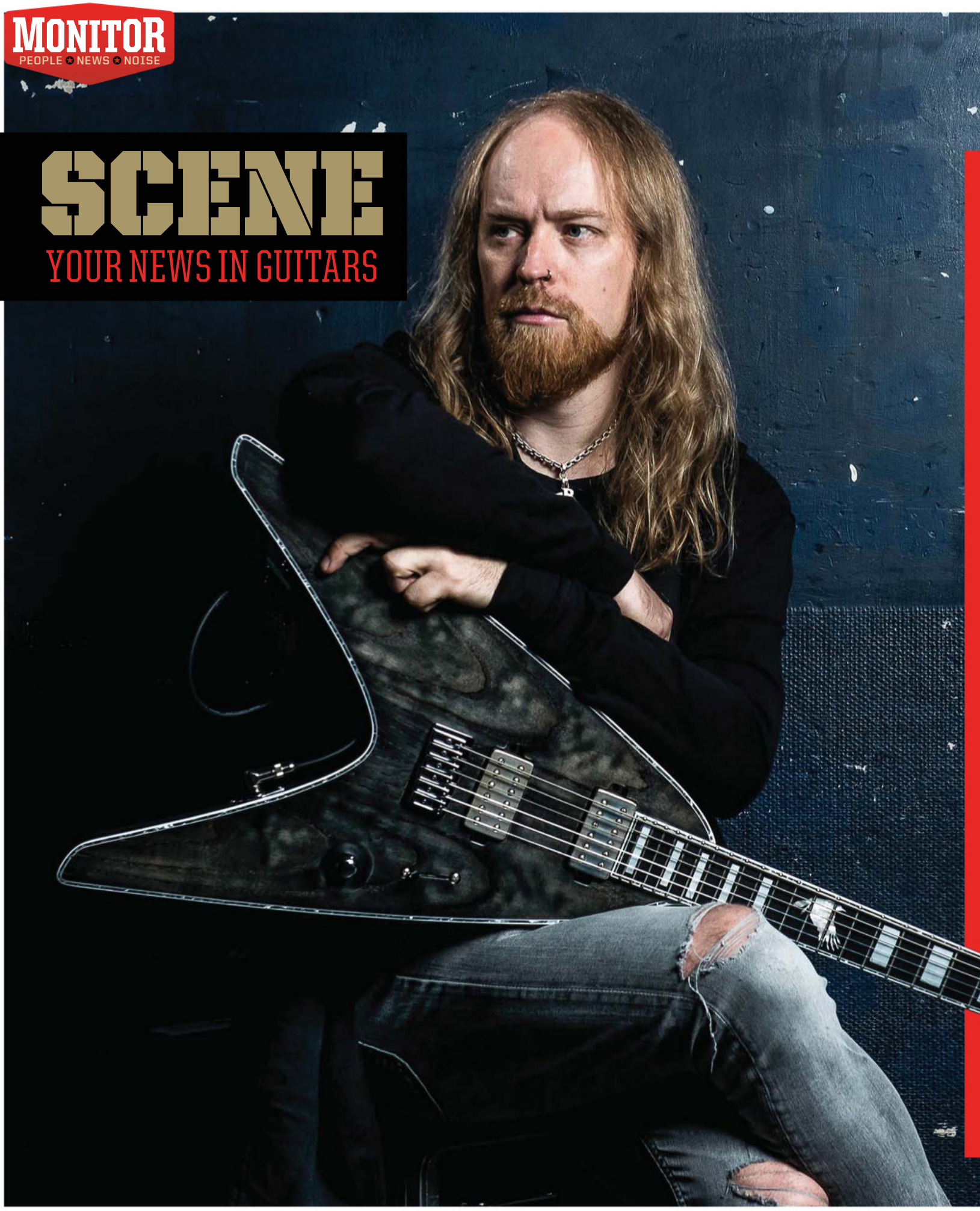
In this image from *The Collection: Slash* – the first book from Gibson Publishing – the legendary Guns N' Roses guitarist is pictured with two of his 400+ guitars – both vintage Korina models, a 1958 Explorer and a '59 Flying V. With the latter he played the leads on the band's 1990 recording of the Bob Dylan classic *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*.

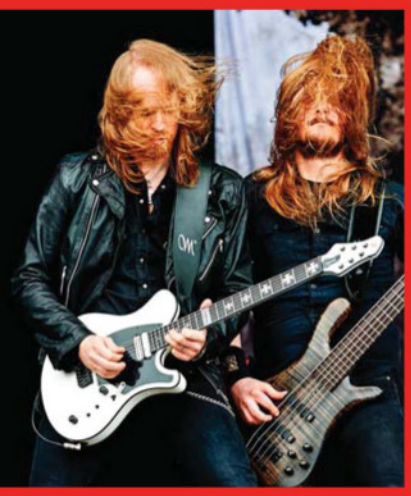
The next issue of *Total Guitar*, available on 10 March, features an in-depth interview with Slash, where he reveals the stories behind these and other prized guitars with which he has created so much of his greatest music.

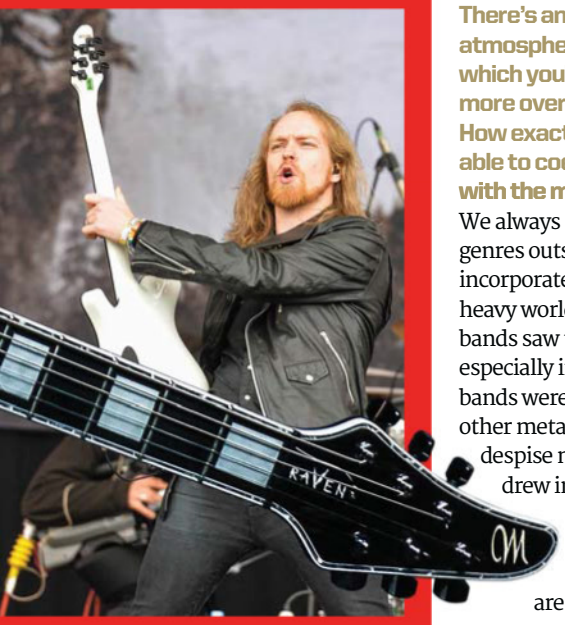
Gibson

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS







ALBUM

"WE SEE NO BORDERS OR LIMITATIONS"

HOW GUITARIST ANDERS NYSTRÖM OF **KATATONIA** COMBINES METALLIC POWER WITH DREAM-LIKE SOUNDS

Stockholm-based Katatonia started their career in 1991 as purveyors of extreme metal. Over the last 15 years, however, they've found their own unique recipe for mixing elements of progressive and gothic rock with alternative pop. Founding guitarist Anders Nyström talks us through the stunning ambiences heard on twelfth album, *Sky Void Of Stars*.

There's an incredibly atmospheric side to Katatonia, which you've built on more and more over the last decade. How exactly are these ideas able to coexist so seamlessly with the more metallic ones?

We always took influence from genres outside of metal, but incorporated them back into our heavy world. I don't think many bands saw that as a possibility, especially in the early days. Metal bands were mostly inspired by other metal bands and would despise many of the artists we drew inspiration from. We may have been more open-minded and that put us where we are today. We see no borders or limitations anymore. We've proven we can write softer material and still have people recognise it as Katatonia.

You've used the Boss Slow Gear a lot over the years – which is an obscure pedal we don't hear about very often.

It all started with me being a passionate user of this little wonderful device called an EBow. It knocks off the attack, but also rings with infinite sustain through a magnet, so it made your guitar leads sound like a bowed instrument. Then I got into sustainer pickups, which would free up both hands and also work polyphonically across all the strings. This led to me finding the Boss Slow Gear, as well as all sorts of delays and reverbs, to open up lush ambient soundscapes that seamlessly fade in and out. Altogether it's very legato-like, creating a dream-like sound that is somewhere in the twilight zone between a guitar and a keyboard.

So what kind of gear are we hearing on this album?

Me and Roger [Öjersson, co-guitarist] used our Mayones and Schecter guitars. We re-amped a lot of the rhythms through boutique amps and plug-ins. The main pedals were a Pigtronix Philosopher's Tone, an Ibanez Chorus, a Black Sheep Trelicopter Tremolo, a Black Sheep Flanger, an MXR Phase 95 kept primarily in the Script 45 mode and an Ibanez Tube Screamer. Others included an AMT M-Lead, which sounds like the preamp stage in my Marshall 2204, an Ibanez Analog Delay, with a Spring Reverb tank made by Anasounds Element fastened underneath the pedalboard. There are actually places on the album where the whole entire chain was used at once!

What advice do you have for guitarists hoping to write their own ambient masterpieces?

It's easy to fall into the same kind of box when in standard tuning, which is why we use dropped and open tunings to break up the routine. Experimenting like that is the best way to come up with different chord shapes to colour the root note in unconventional ways. Personally, I love transitions that take me from major to minor. The hit of melancholy is greater with contrast. You need a bit of light to appreciate you're in the darkness!

Amit Sharma

Photos Will Ireland/Getty

MULTI-FX

PRS SE MCCARTY 594

PRS has been busy with a clutch of new releases across its catalogue for 2023. And while the DGT has finally reached the affordable line-up (check back next month for a review), the company has also made another first – offering its McCarty model in the SE series, too. The SE McCarty 594 comes in doublecut, singlecut versions with the 24.594-inch scale that it takes its name from. Both are mahogany bodies with maple tops and flame maple veneers, loaded with 58/15 LT "S" humbuckers. Neck-wise, it's a 22-fret Pattern Vintage with a thick back for added sustain, faced with a rosewood fingerboard. Both are available soon at £1049.

PEDAL

WALRUS AUDIO MELEE

What do you get if you couple reverb with distortion and throw-in a joystick controller offering X/Y blending, that can be operated by your foot? The Walrus Audio Melee, that's what. This 'Wall of Noise' pedal includes three reverb algorithms: Ambient, Octave Down and Reverse Reverb with Feedback. The first two toggle switches give tone and decay switching, while the third allows you to change the reverb/distortion order in the signal chain. The resulting tones make this a shoegazer's dream, and it can be yours for £305.

GUITAR

FENDER GOLD FOIL

You might wonder just what's left for Fender product designers when trying to reimagine its classic models. Fender's new Gold Foil models take inspiration from the 60s garage rock scene by loading a Jazzmaster (£1,439) and Telecaster (£1,219) with Gold Foil mini-humbucking pickups. In the case of the Jazzmaster, we get a triple-pronged approach, as well as a Bigsby vibrato, Jag-style switch plate and matching headstock. The Tele, meanwhile, keeps things simple with a mahogany body, a pair of mini-humbuckers and a 'chopped brass' three-saddle bridge. Both feature ebony fingerboards and are available in two finishes with Candy Apple Burst across both guitars, plus Shoreline Gold (Jazzmaster) and White Blonde (Telecaster).

The 5150 Iconic Series

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9 CHANNEL AMP SIM / PREAMP / DI
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FX LOOP & MIDI

Words Stuart Williams **Photography** Phil Barker

THE PREAMPS ARE REVOLTING!

Two Notes knows a bit about direct guitar tone. Now it's putting its money where your feet are with a three-channel analogue amp simulator pedal

If there's one product that has got people thinking about serious rig overhauls over the last 12 months or so, it's pedalboard-based preamps. These do-it-all boxes are fast becoming an all-round solution that bridges the gap between the home, the studio and the stage, and the latest comes from impulse response/direct box experts, Two Notes.

Actually described by Two Notes as an 'Analog amp', the ReVolt was actually announced last year, and has finally arrived packing three channels of all-analogue, valve-powered tone which it says is "the beating heart of your rig". Channel one is inspired by a Fender Bassman, channel two serves up vintage Marshall-style tones, and channel three is aping the high-gain sound of a Soldano SLO 100. Each channel includes its own gain and level controls, with a two-band EQ on channel one, and a shared three-band, plus overdrive boost circuit on channels two and three.

Valve-wise, there's a 12AX7, running at 200v into a switchable, analogue-emulated DI output based on a Marshall 4x12" Slash cab, and the rest of the connectivity is comprehensive too. We get standard inputs and outputs, an effects loop - with 4-cable method support - a balanced DI output via an XLR socket, and MIDI in/out courtesy of mini-jacks. To the front, there's an aux-in and headphone output making this potentially truly useful in practice, recording and live situations. It costs £329, and is available now.

UP CLOSE

Analogue Sim

Forget modelling, the ReVolt's three channels are all-analogue, and based on a trio of classic valve amps ranging from clean to crunch to high-gain.

Valve-driven

There's a 12AX7 preamp valve at the heart of the ReVolt, and it's being run at a high voltage, too.

Connectivity

Not only are the controls fully-stocked, but there's connectivity to match with an effects loop, balanced DI, MIDI in/out, headphones and more!

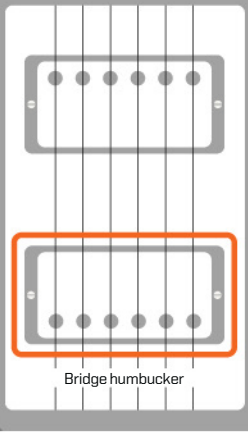
HOW TO

RIFF OF THE MONTH

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ A natural minor scale
- ✔ Single-note picking
- ✔ Powerchords

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



Tony and Hunter use a range of classic guitars from Les Pauls and Flying Vs to Fender Stratocasters and, interestingly, a Baldwin Baby Bison fitted with Brian May style Tri-Sonic pickups, through a souped up Marshall-type amp like a Friedman. Use a distorted tone to allow the powerchords to sustain, but dial the gain back enough to keep the single-note riffing clear. The original recording is played in E♭ standard tuning, but our example is in E standard so you can practise without downtuning.

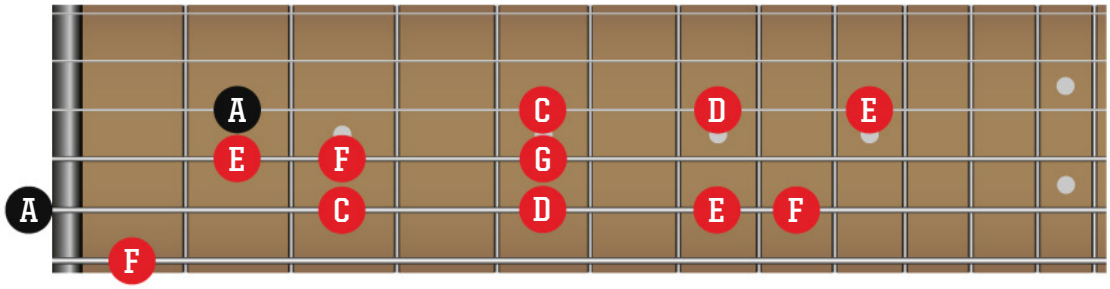
WHITE REAPER

Pink Slip

This track is taken from White Reaper's fourth studio album *Asking For A Ride*, released in January 2023. Frontman Tony Esposito and guitarist Hunter Thompson play the high energy pop-punk riff using a combination of single notes and powerchords. The riff outlines the chord progression C–F–Am, but instead of being played as chords, we use the chord tones to arpeggiate and form the riff. The first four notes are based around a C major sound, then the riff moves down to the 1st fret for an F powerchord shape played as single notes before landing on an A5 powerchord. The A5 powerchord is then spiced up with some melodic notes based in the scale. The first time, play the melody by sliding on the third string, then on the second time use the open fifth string to play a pedal-note melody.

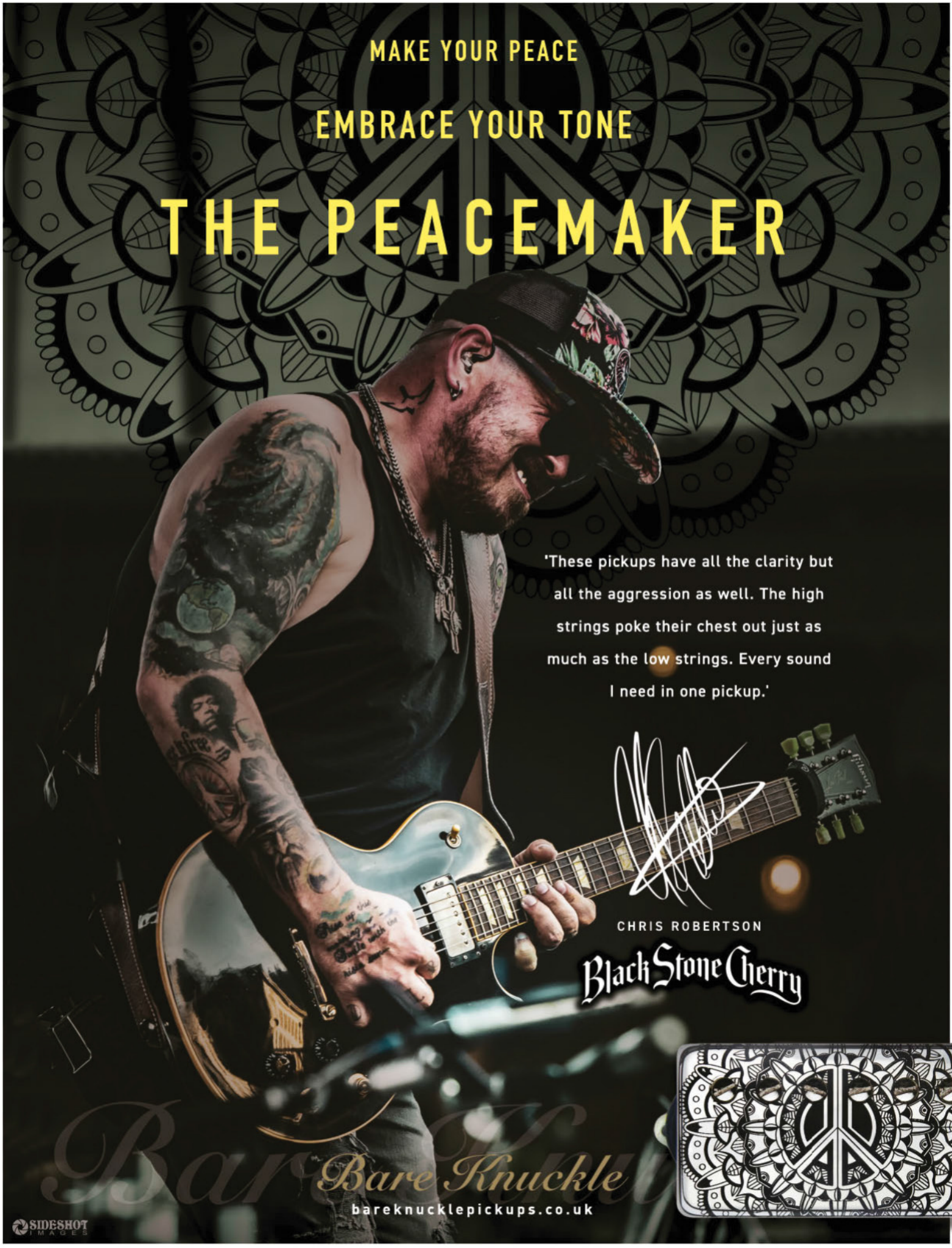
CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 0:00–0:23
Tempo: 167bpm
Key/scale: A Aeolian
Main techniques: Single-note picking, string muting, arpeggios



This riff is based on notes from the A natural minor scale (A B C D E F G) – though the B doesn't appear. Try to identify the notes that outline the basic C-F-Am chord progression, as well as the notes that go farther afield. This is a great opportunity to learn where the notes are on the fretboard, so try naming the notes as you play the riff.

Photo Getty


MAKE YOUR PEACE
EMBRACE YOUR TONE
THE PEACEMAKER
'These pickups have all the clarity but all the aggression as well. The high strings poke their chest out just as much as the low strings. Every sound I need in one pickup.'
CHRIS ROBERTSON
Black Stone Cherry
Bare Knuckle
bareknucklepickups.co.uk
SIDESHOT IMAGES

FIVE WAYS TO...

PLAY A BLUES TURNAROUND

Gain new approaches to the most important part of a blues

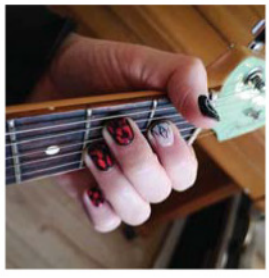
The turnaround is the section of a piece of music that leads back to the beginning. In a 12-bar blues, you can think of either the last four bars or the last two bars as the turnaround. For now we're just focusing on the last two. If you nail the turnaround, you'll sound like you know exactly what you're doing, and your solos will have satisfying endings.

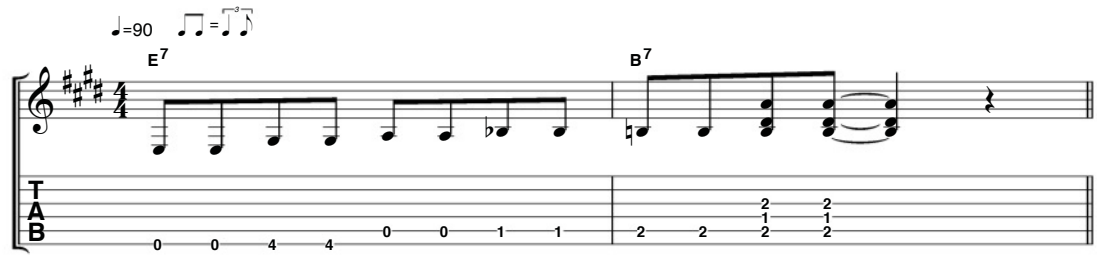
Although you can just play the minor pentatonic aimlessly over most 12-bars and sound okay, your solos will harmonise more sweetly with the band if you emphasise notes that are found in the chords you're playing over. Because we're in the key of E this month, the chords we're playing over are E7 and B7. Simply hitting an E note on the first beat of the E7 chord and finishing on a B as the chord changes to B7 will sound more in sync with the backing.

As you get more confident with this you can try using other notes from the chords. The notes E, B, and D all appear in both the E minor pentatonic scale *and* the E7 chord, so any of them can make great targets over that chord. Of the notes in B7, B and A both appear in E minor pentatonic. The other notes live nearby, too: F# is on the E string, 2nd/14th fret, and D# on the B string, 4th/16th fret.

The key is to listen to the backing track *and* to your guitar. If you're only listening to yourself, you won't notice how well your note choices are working. Learning a few classic turnarounds will help to develop your ear. And, once you're tuned into the sound of licks that follow the changes, your ear will lead you towards those satisfying sounds.

EXAMPLE 1 WALKING BASSLINE **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

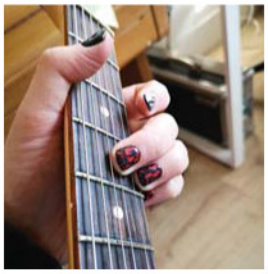


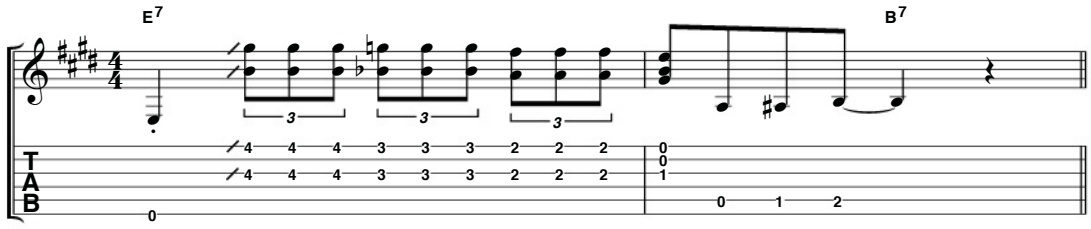


You can use this bassline as a rhythm or a lead part. The line in bar 1 very obviously builds from E up to B at the start of bar 2, matching up with the B7 chord and gradually building the momentum to return to the start of the 12-bar blues progression.

Words, guitars and backing Jenna Scaramanga **Photo** Getty

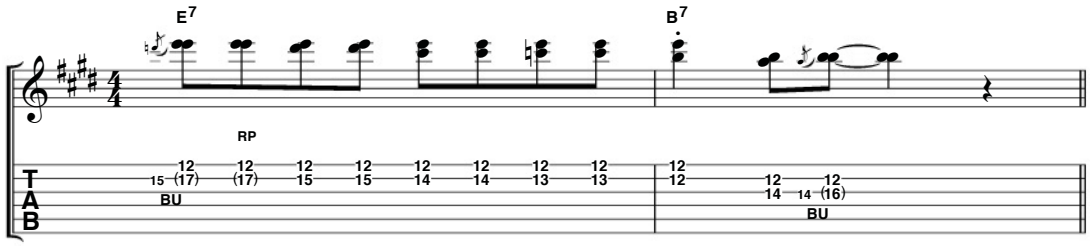
EXAMPLE 2 HARMONISED 6THS **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**





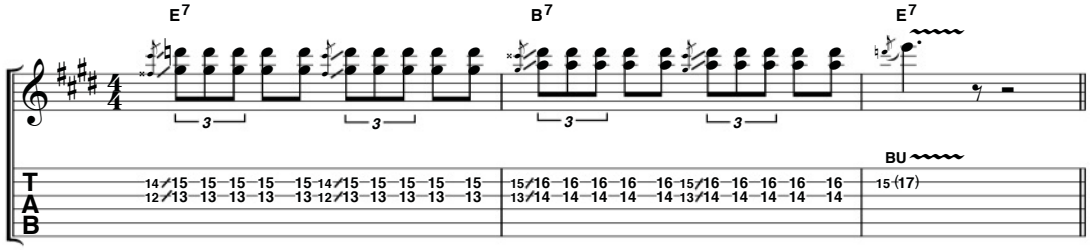
The opening two-note shape in bar 1 has notes from an E7 chord (B and G♯), and the chromatic movement downwards builds tension. In this key the open B string sounds good but practise muting it anyway so you can move the lick around the neck and play it in other keys.

EXAMPLE 3 ROCK 'N' ROLL TURNAROUND **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



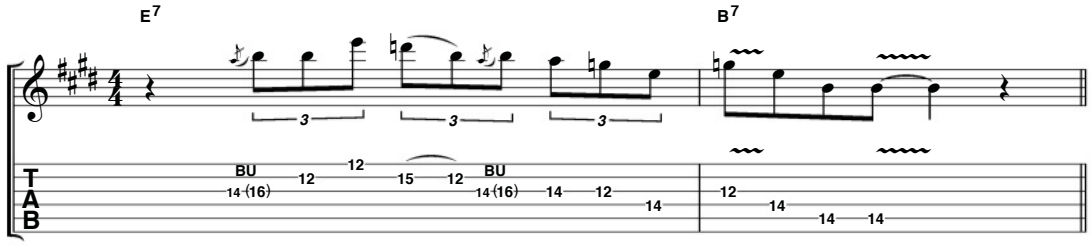
This one works extremely well over the walking bassline from Example 1. With a screaming bridge pickup and hard attack it can sound quite Brian Setzer-like, but with a mellower tone it'll work over a softer blues, too.

EXAMPLE 4 TRITONES **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



The E7 chord contains G♯ and D notes, while one fret higher you'll find A and D♯, both found in B7. You can therefore use the same shape for both chords, simply sliding up a fret as needed. We've added a final E because it sounds horrible unless you resolve it!

EXAMPLE 5 CLASSIC LEAD LICK **BIT.LY/TG367AUDIO**



This is a classic lead line typical of Eric Clapton. The first bar mainly uses notes from the E minor pentatonic scale and the E7 chord, and the lick finishes on a B note, emphasising the chord change underneath.

Words Amit Sharma Photography Bryan Beasley

"IN THE STUDIO I DO EVERYTHING – AND HAVE FUN DOING IT"

2023 is another big year for **Wolfgang Van Halen** with a new album and a new signature EVH Guitar

5150
EVH
5150

Recent years have witnessed many a guitar hero in the making, but few have felt as genuinely electrifying as Wolfgang Van Halen. Of course, there's the genetic advantage – his father was undoubtedly the most important rock guitarist to follow on from the likes of Hendrix and Page. And Wolfgang had also played bass in the Van Halen line-up for the band's final album and consecutive world tour, not long after his 20th birthday.

But on the singer/guitarist's 2021 debut as Mammoth WVH – which he composed, sung and performed singlehandedly – Wolfgang proved his talents alone were enough to stop people in their tracks and take notice. The year that followed included many high-profile dates with Guns N' Roses and Alter Bridge, as well as those unforgettable performances with Dave Grohl, Justin Hawkins and Josh Freese at the two tribute show for the late Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins.

And as Wolfgang tells TG, 2023 looks set to be even more exciting, from his new signature instrument with EVH Guitars (the Fender-owned brand he co-runs with longtime Van Halen tech Matt Bruck), a new album (which includes his first piano ballad) and then the small matter of a world tour with Metallica…

You were mainly using your EVH SA-126 prototype over the course of 2022. We're excited to see the official release…
Oh, it's been a very exciting project! I think we're nearing completion now. We've been working on it for a few years, revising the way it's built so manufacturing can be easier, making little changes here and there. There's an E-hole instead of an F-hole for Pop – and we've made that a tiny bit bigger and lined it up with the pickups. It's just been little innocuous things that people won't really notice, but we're very critical of everything so we've been trying to figure out the right kind of updates. I can't exactly guarantee when it will be available, but we're getting really close. This next year will be the last crash-testing phase for the guitar, given all the touring we have planned. I'm very excited about 2023!

The name of the guitar refers to your Dad's birthday, January 26… much like the Van Halen track *316* was in reference to your birthday.
Yeah! But at the same time, if somebody were to pick up the guitar and see 126 written on it, they wouldn't immediately think it's some sort of tribute. I think it's kinda hidden within it, and that's what I like most. The dedication to my dad isn't what overrides the entire thing. The most important aspect is that it's an amazing instrument that all kinds of players can pick up and enjoy.

So in what ways does a semi-hollow affect your playing and approach to tone?
I guess it all comes down to how we approached the recording process way back in 2015, which is when I started doing the initial guitar tracking for the debut. There was a bunch of experimentation to try and figure out my tone. It was an intentional move to not sound exactly like my dad. I wanted to be my own person with my own sound. That's what drove me to semi-hollow guitars, embracing a different kind of vibe. But I also enjoy the modern approach, so basically it's the classic sound of a 335 or semi-hollow merged with what the brand is known for: high performance, shreddy types of guitars. The neck is super thin and wide, which is not something you'd normally find on a 335. They usually have f*ckin' baseball bats for necks, which is awesome if that's what you're into. When it comes to playing quick passages and stuff like that, this is an instrument that didn't exist but now does! That's another reason why I'm so excited about it.

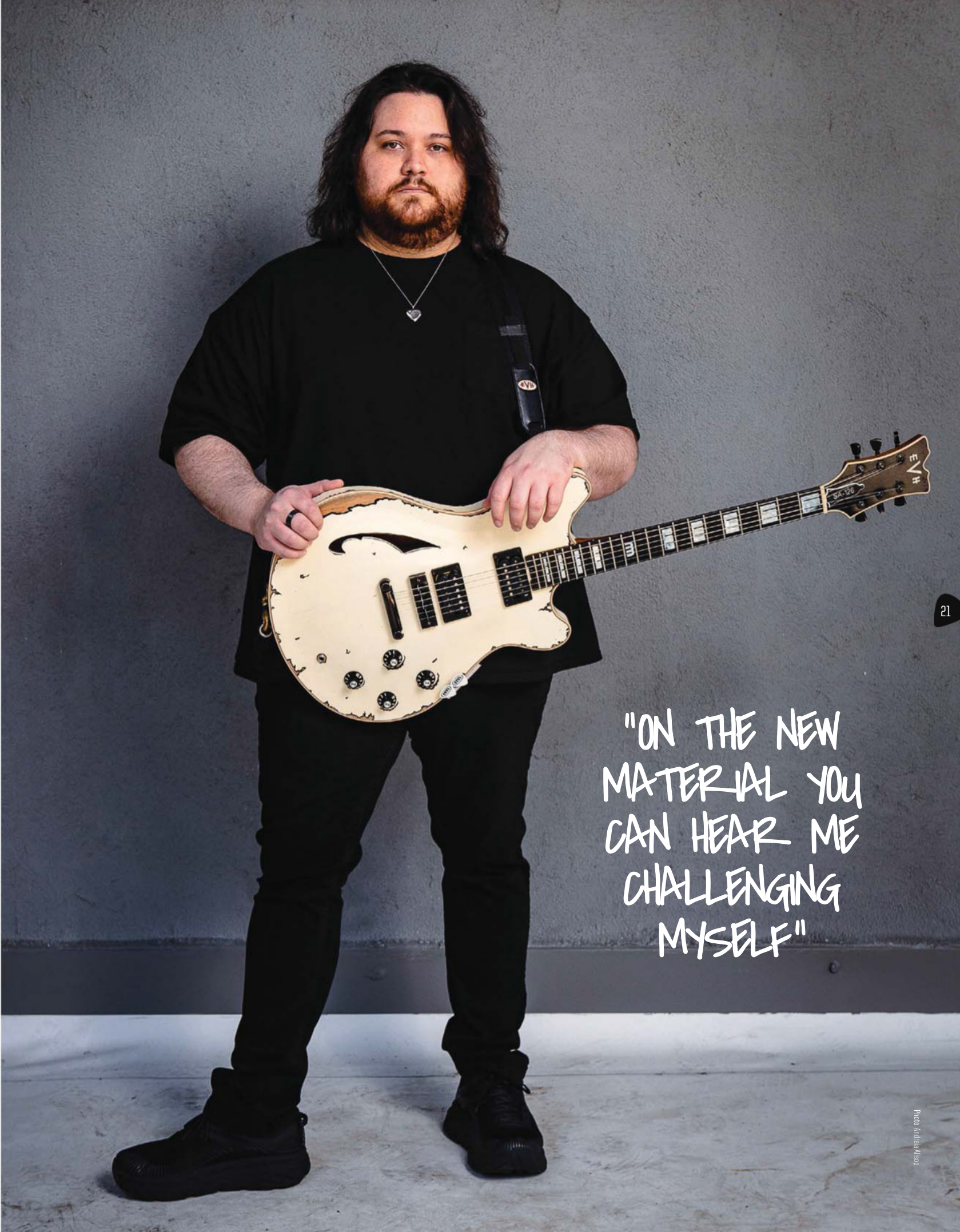
As for the pickups, are they specifically voiced for semis and noticeably different to the ones found on solid-body Wolfgang models?
If I'm not mistaken, the typical output of a classical semi-hollow is around 8.2k. We basically made a standard, hotter and hottest version – then going back and forth on tour, trying to figure out which we liked best. We ended up landing in the middle because it keeps the full tone of the guitar while not going too overboard, because that's the dangerous thing about semi-hollows, you worry about whether it will feed back too much. We wanted to push things to the limit without making it impossible to control.

What kind of DCR will they be reading, then?
I think it's around 10.2k. It's not too hot, but it's still hotter than your average PAF-style pickup found on those classic guitars. It's hard to remember exactly. After just getting back from a seven week tour, I'm sort of wacky in the brain right now!

The guitar is like a hybrid of a 335 and the Fender Starcaster you were playing in the *Don't Back Down* video. Another Easter egg is that the inlays say W, E or M depending on which way you're looking at them… genius!
Yeah, they kind of work three ways. That was an amazing coincidence and something I found to make the guitar even cooler!

You used your Dad's vintage ES-335 on the debut album, though it ended up getting broken. What happened, exactly?
Yeah, that was during the first round of tracking. The first guitars I cut were with that one and playing that guitar is what made me realise I wanted to explore semi-hollows more, because I never used one before then. It was an old guitar that my dad had, I believe either a '58 or '59. We were tuning it and as I was turning one of the pegs, it crumbled in my hands because it was so old. It basically just disintegrated and I was like, 'Ooooh, that's not good!' And Dad thought it was hilarious. He was like, 'Wow, that sh*t's old, it doesn't matter!' We got it fixed up and luckily it stayed in tune enough to finish the track, which was nice. Playing that vintage 335 made me fall in love with the semi-hollow sound.

Let's get to the new music. It sounds like you're almost finished and once again you played everything on the album…
Yeah, I've almost finished it! Some people try to turn me playing everything into a negative thing, which surprises me! It's like they think I won't let other people play on it or something like that. But really this is what Mammoth is and always has been – it's my artistic expression. I've been in bands before



"ON THE NEW MATERIAL YOU CAN HEAR ME CHALLENGING MYSELF"

Photo Andrea Alsop

where you collaborate and that's not what this is. I have a live band but in the studio I do everything and have a fun time doing it. I enjoy being able to express myself musically in every avenue.

So what can we expect? Is there anything different in terms of style?
It will always sound a bit similar, I guess, because the same dude is writing it! But I think on this current material, you can hear me challenging myself a bit more. I've gotten more confident and I know what the project is now, rather than trying to figure out what it was from the start, like on the first one. On the debut there was this width of what the project was – on the left you had songs like *Distance* and *Circles*, those softer vibes, and on the right you had tracks like *Stone* and *The Big Picture*. In the middle, there were songs like *Mammoth* or *Epiphany* and stuff like that. What I want to do with this album is widen what that breadth is. Further left, for example, there's a song that's all on piano… so it has more of a softer vibe. But on the right, there's some really heavy sh*t in comparison to the debut! That's what I find really exciting, it's fun to stretch the definition of Mammoth on both sides.

And what are the main differences in terms of gear?
Well, the main thing which stole the show is the SA-126. It's on pretty much the entirety of the album. We were almost surprised as we kept going through. It was like, 'Wow, okay this works for this, too' and 'Oh my god, this works really well again over here!' From the cleans to the really heavy stuff, it sounded crazy! The only thing I have left to do is track the guitar solos, so what I want to do is go through some of Pop's notable guitars and do a solo with each of them. Guitars like the Frankenstein or the Shark, stuff like that.

Very nice! Because when we last spoke, you mentioned you'd used the Frankenstein on two tracks: *Mammoth* and *Feel*. Obviously it's a guitar that's kept very safely under lock and key, and rightly so. Very few people will ever get to see it, let alone play it, so could you tell us how it feels to hold in your hands in terms of weight, action and neck profile?
Well, if anyone's ever played the EVH Bumblebee reissue, it's very similar to the Frankenstein profile. Dad was developing that neck at the same time, and hell, with the Frankenstein reissue it's pretty much one-for-one. It's very faithful to the original, which is obviously a lot older. You can feel the history sort of emanating out of the Frankenstein. Picking up that guitar is almost a religious experience, even if you're not a religious person. You just kinda hold it and feel the history right there in your hands. It's funny, when I started recording with it back in 2015, we pulled it out and Dad picked it up, played it for a second and then sorta just tossed it on the couch. Everybody in the room gasped! Because to us, it's quite literally the most famous guitar in the existence of music, where to him it was this little piece of junk he put together. So that divide in opinion over it was funny to see!

Well, he certainly got a lot of mileage out of it, and we're guessing it's been refretted a lot over the years!
Oh yeah! He was constantly tinkering with it – that's why it was called the Frankenstein! He was never satisfied.

Your pedalboard so far has consisted of nearly all the EVH pedals, plus a Boss DD3 and an EarthQuaker Afterneath. Have there been any recent additions or updates?
I have pretty much every EVH pedal but honestly they're there just for fun. My whole pedalboard isn't really born out of necessity except for one pedal, which is the Afterneath. I use that for the solo on *Distance*. It's a killer reverb. It's the only pedal I have to hit during the show. I use the DD3 occasionally too. Sometimes the signal varies from building to building, so if I want that extra bit of 'jooj' I'll hit the delay as well. I used a talkbox on *You'll Be The One*, but a wah is fine for when we play live… I really don't need much to get the job done!

HOLY GROUND
Wolfgang at 5150 Studios, home of the family business

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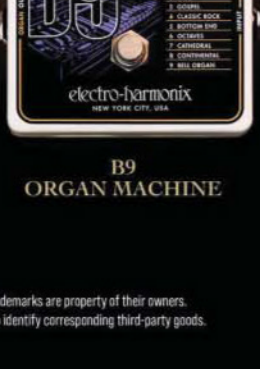

B9
ORGAN MACHINE

C9
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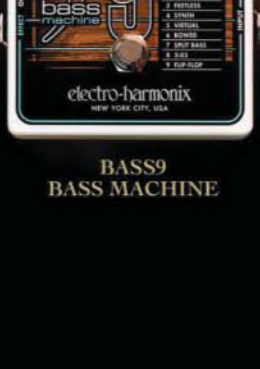

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Words Amit Sharma **Portraits** Larry DiMarzio

"I JUST SHUT UP AND PLAYED ROCK GUITAR!"

Steve Vai tells the amazing story of his 'lost' album – feel-good music with a tragic backstory

It says a lot about Steve Vai that when he connects with *Total Guitar* to discuss his latest release – an album that remained unheard for 30 years until now – he's just as interested in what we make of it as he is in regaling the fascinating story behind the music. "What you were thinking when you first heard it?" he asks. "You can be as brutally honest as you want…"

It's certainly not the way interviews are usually conducted, but then Steve Vai has always been the antithesis of normality – a wildly charismatic player who early on chose to pursue paths less trodden, avoiding many of the typical conventions and clichés of the instrument in order to discover and develop his own unique voice. Equally, as one of the original heroes from a movement of guitar players who often came with inflated egos, Vai has always been disarmingly down to earth, even if his music is anything but.

The album in question is the guitarist's one-off collaboration with singer Johnny 'Gash' Sombrotto, who tragically died in a motorcycle accident shortly after the recording. Titled simply *Vai/Gash*, it is one of the guitarist's more universally palatable and, dare we say it, simplistic offerings, although it still contains enough of those signature Vai-isms to please his diehard fans.

"Over the next few months I guess I'll be talking about a character called Johnny Gash a lot," Vai says. "But there's nothing I could possibly say to capture the personality of the guy. Only those that knew him could really get a grip on what he was about. He was the best, he was the funniest. Okay, so where would you like me to start?"

Rewind to 1991, when Vai was touring the genre-defining masterpiece *Passion And Warfare*, his second solo album released the year prior. Once described by its creator as "Jimi Hendrix meets Jesus Christ at a party that Ben Hur threw for Mel Blanc", *Passion And Warfare* would become, virtually overnight, one of the quintessential instrumental guitar albums – full of melodic twists and turns that no-one else could have possibly conceived, let alone played. It was around this time Vai decided to write and record a spur-of-the-moment album with his new biker friend Johnny.

"When I was young, I was really into motorcycle culture though as a teenager I could never really afford one," he recalls. "Finally when I moved out to California, I was able to get one, then eventually a Harley, and then eventually seven Harleys! In the process, a good friend introduced me to Johnny. His nickname was 'Gash' because he was such a wild child motorcycle enthusiast. When he was 21, he was riding along these power lines and he climbed up this tower to get a view. There was an electrical arc which went through his body and he caught fire, falling 60 feet onto a barbed wire fence…

"He was found by another biker. Somehow they made it to a house and he survived, but with 60% of his body severely burned. The stories he told of that experience and the excruciating pain he went through were unbelievable. But he survived it and eventually moved out to California. When our paths crossed, I thought he was the most interesting, quirky, charming and stinging person I'd ever met!"

Something the guitarist didn't realise until much later, however, was that his new friend had a powerful set of lungs that resonated in tandem with the warm spirit of his daredevil personality. After years of riding around together

"I PICTURED BIG SONGS THAT WOULD MAKE PEOPLE PUT THEIR FISTS IN THE AIR"

exploring the sun-kissed Californian hills to the soundtrack of 70s biker rock, Vai had something of an epiphany. How about they make their own music for these breathtakingly epic journeys?

"Eventually Gash showed me this tape of him singing Frank Sinatra, because he loved that music," Vai recalls. "I was listening to this beautiful, clean and smooth crooner voice and thinking he sounded just like Frank. I asked if he sang anything else and he said 'Yeah, I kid around, you know!' We'd be out doing stuff and I'd hear him screaming. That's when I realised he had pitch and this special quality to his voice, especially when doing those 'Oooh yeahs!' He'd never sung rock 'n' roll. We'd be riding and the one question was always 'What shall we listen to?' – because how many times can you listen to Steppenwolf? So I came up with an idea: let's write an album and record it just for us to enjoy while we are riding!"

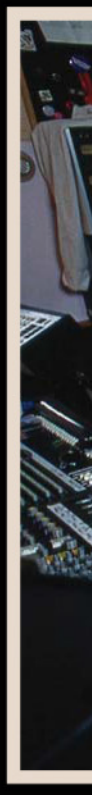
The music came quick and fast in what Vai describes as a "stream of consciousness", to the point where he can't remember doing it, what he used or who else might have been involved. One thing was for certain, however – he was right to have followed his instincts. His new partner-in-crime and fellow petrolhead was clearly a man of many talents...

"When he started singing, I just couldn't believe it," Vai says. "He was a total rockstar, and I know my rockstars! I've listened to this project several times a year, sometimes even more, because his voice made it one of my favourite projects across my career. The music came from a very warm place and always made us feel good. We'd listen to it constantly, wherever we'd go.

"It was all done so fast, I don't even know who played drums. I've been calling every drummer I know and they're all like, 'It wasn't me, Steve!' I can't even remember the dates or the engineer that helped. This all got ripped out in a week or two. There were no wacky solos or in-between quirky bits, nothing but hard rock 'n' roll – the way I used to like it. We had eight songs recorded and I thought to myself, 'One day we'll take this, add some songs and release it!' Then there was the accident and Gash was killed..."

The news was devastating – Vai had not only lost a friend but a musical accomplice whom he had big plans for. He chose not to release the album for various reasons, including the fact that he was still promoting *Passion And Warfare* and also starting to work on its 1993 follow-up *Sex And Religion*. He was also aware that the Gash record would have been a departure from the flamboyant and otherworldly noises he'd made a name for himself playing and, with his singer now deceased, it could have been ever so slightly "limiting" for this point in his career. Three decades on, however, the guitarist feels that the "beautiful and compelling" music needs to be heard, especially after being treated by Canadian super mixer/engineer Mike Fraser (AC/DC, Van Halen, Metallica).

Now it's been officially unveiled, most fans will be able to relate these old tracks to Vai's stints in Whitesnake and David Lee Roth's band, which were more song-based than his typically instrumental solo meditations. Which explains why the guitar acrobatics captured on singles



"JOHNNY 'GASH' WAS A TOTAL ROCKSTAR, AND I KNOW MY ROCKSTARS!"

like *In The Wind* and *Busted* are more pentatonic and blues-based than the Lydian dreamscapes heard on modal favourites like *The Riddle* or the Aeolian thunder explored on greatest hit *For The Love Of God*. This is the sound of Vai at his most direct.

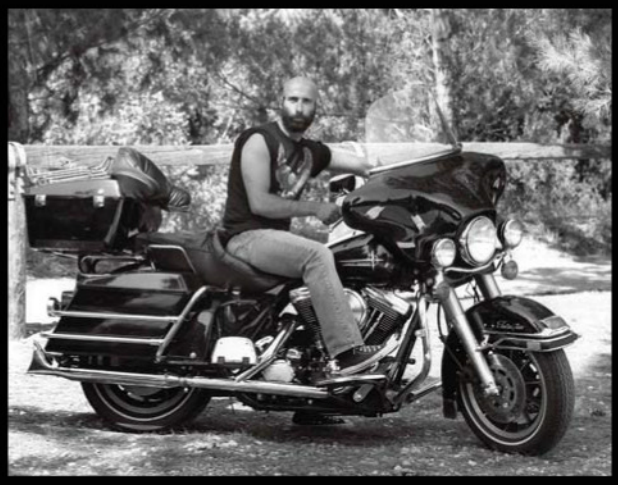
"I don't really consider this blues, but I guess you could call a lot of it blues-rock," nods Vai. "It's rock that's derived from the blues scale. But everything I play, in mind, I derive from the blues scale. It just might not sound that way when you hear it against all those weird chords. The biker mentality is at the core of this record. I loved the lifestyle and people. Me and Gash would go on these trips and meet all these incredible characters from *The Breed* or *Hells Angels*, being taken by their simplicity, intelligence and humanity. If you were able to squeeze these memories, they would emit a certain musical style and sound. This record is exactly that. I wanted to make a record with no bullsh*t. You just get on your bike and feel good…

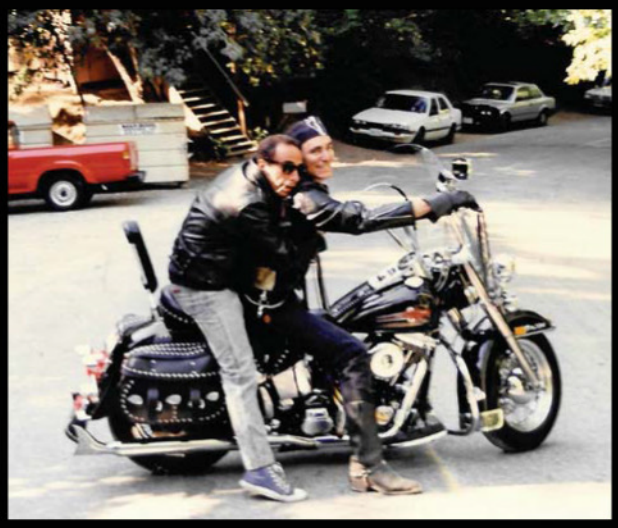
"Which is why I just shut up and played rock guitar. Yeah, there's some quirky Vai stuff in there but not much. I pictured big songs that would make people put their fists in the air. And, actually, this is a great way for guitar players to experiment – you imagine it, then get yourself out of the way and just start doing it. I didn't give myself a chance to go too mad. But even within the parameters of the pentatonic scale, there are many things you can do. Within limits is the infinite! Sure, you have to be extra creative with the five or six notes you've got, but it helps you realise anything is always possible!"

Other songs like *She Saved My Life Tonight* witness Vai doing things he's less known for, such as mixing the major and minor pentatonic scales like the blues masters of old – who would often play minor pentatonic shapes three frets lower for their relative major before returning back to home base, instigating a 'call and answer' of sorts. Vai explains moments like this came from his heart rather than his head – relying on his natural instincts and first takes more than anything else. "When you throw yourself into it and don't think too much, the music just manifests," he reasons. "You create a raw vision or psychological atmosphere for the harmonic and melodic dimensions."

A lot of these bluesy foundations were laid while studying from the age of 12 under friend and mentor Joe Satriani, whose guidance left a long-lasting impression on Vai, as well as other famous students such as Kirk Hammett and Alex Skolnick. As for Vai's veteran pentatonic paragons, he notes Jimmy Page, Brian May and Ritchie Blackmore as the players who set the bar at its highest. There was something about their clarity and simplicity, Vai believes, that made them indisputable masters of their trade.

"And when I say simplicity, I don't mean it in a bad way," he notes. "It's just not like Allan Holdsworth, whose work embodied complexity. So if you think I'm calling Ritchie Blackmore simple, I'm not. I'm just saying his approach feels simple compared to some of the other things I've listened to. More importantly, it's beautiful. All of these players are somewhere in there when I pick up a guitar, but whenever I'm going to do a solo, I ask myself what would be most appropriate for each track. How stupid would it have been if on a song like *She Saved My Life Tonight*, I started playing all this tension-building fusion stuff that wasn't bluesy. You'd think 'What are you doing, Vai? You ruined it!' That's why this record had to be completely uplifting, caveman sh*t!"





BORN TO BE WILD
Above: Gash (top) and Vai on their hogs. Left: Steve in the studio during the recording of the *Vai/Gash* album.

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Portrait** Lewis Evans

"IF EVERYTHING'S TURNED UP TO 11, THEN NOTHING IS"

Sometimes, more is less – even for **Inhaler**, specialists in anthemic rock, led by Bono's son

BREATHE DEEP
Inhaler (from left) Josh Jenkinson, Robert Keating, Eli Hewson, Ryan McMahon

When their debut album *It Won't Always Be Like This* entered the album charts on both sides of the Irish Sea at #1, Inhaler established themselves as the future of mainstream guitar music. Eager to capitalise, the Dublin workaholics took just one day off between the end of their last tour and starting work on the follow-up. "We were trying to catch up on time so it was fairly hectic," says singer/guitarist Elijah Hewson. Eli and fellow axeman Josh Jenkinson are responsible for Inhaler's epic, delay-soaked guitar sounds. The new album *Cuts & Bruises* arrives as one of 2023's most anticipated releases, and the band felt the pressure as they worked on it. Then there was the small matter of living up to the family name – Eli's dad is one Paul Hewson, better known as Bono.

Any Irish band majoring in anthemic rock is going to be asked if they're the new U2, but Inhaler are the only ones who might gain the title through the line of descent. Eli and Josh are relaxed about the comparisons, though.

"I think being Irish you just can't avoid somehow sounding like U2," muses Eli. "They've been around for so long, they've influenced so many of our favourite bands, that you can't avoid that reference. People are like, 'Oh that riff sounds a bit like The Edge,' and it's like, 'Yeah, well who f*cking cares? The Edge is good!'"

"We just make sure not to turn on the dotted eighth delay," quips Josh, referencing The Edge's signature setting. "Yeah," laughs Eli. "We've blacked it out on the pedals!"

Like Wolfgang Van Halen, Eli is neither trying to sound like his dad nor trying to hide the connection. "When we were younger we were a lot like more wary of that," he says. "But now, I don't know – just whatever sounds good to be honest. If people don't like U2 they're certainly not going to like us!"

He is keen to stress, however, that Inhaler have paid their dues like any other band. "We made a big point of wanting to go out and do

it by ourselves. We toured the toilets of Ireland and the UK for a long time before we even got management. We thought that was really important."

The band's other influences are indie mainstays. Josh notes the influence Interpol had on the way they write guitar parts, while Eli absorbed his core influences when the band started out playing covers. "Those songs that you first cover seem to always be in the way that you play," Eli suggests. "We used to play a lot of Joy Division as well as Stone Roses and all that Manchester Britpop thing. Bernard Sumner [of Joy Division and New Order] is still my favourite guitar player."

What Inhaler have in common with U2 is big ambition. "We've never made a small-sounding record," he comments. "I think we started on our fifth record and we're slowly going backwards – eventually we'll get to the stripped down demo! We've just always had a desire to write songs that feel anthemic and demand a big sound."

Cuts & Bruises is indeed a huge record, but sounds big with less effort than their debut. "We didn't have any time to do overdubs!" laughs Josh. "It was like, 'That take's good, slap it on!'"

Where in the past they had layered things to infinity, this time they were more sparing. "We went in with the idea to get more for less," Eli says. "Maybe the individual instruments still sound big, but there's definitely less stuff with like 100 drums on one track. We wanted to be more thoughtful about what we're putting in our soup. What we learned after the first album was that if everything's turned up to 11, then nothing is."

The band moved quickly, demoing songs live in the studio and then immediately cutting their final parts. Some particularly good demo takes ended up on the final album. Producer Ant Genn recorded a DI from each of their guitars so demo parts could be reamped if necessary. They were inspired by watching the Beatles' *Get Back* documentary. As the pressure mounted throughout the recording process, says Josh, "*Get Back* showed us you can go through all those struggles of chasing a song, but you'll get somewhere at the end of it."

The album is darker than the debut, reflective of the tensions involved in making it. "At the start of the year, when we went in, it was very free," Josh says. "The pressure was there but it wasn't looming. It just started looming more and more as the as the year progressed."

NO FRILLS
"Your tone should be good from your fingers and what's coming out of your amp," says Josh Jenkinson

"We felt like our friendship maybe wasn't flowing as well as it could," admits Eli. "That's a really scary feeling when these are people you've grown up with. Making music and used to be a hobby and now it's our job. We've got our crew relying on us. It just felt like we'd grown up really fast, and you join a band to not grow up, so it was weird." For all that tension, though, the album is not lacking in euphoric moments. "Even when we're feeling down, we write happy-sounding songs with major chords," Eli says. "We still want people to feel elated at our gigs."

The massive guitar sounds come from two Strymon-heavy pedalboards, although Josh stresses, "You don't need a massive 'board. Your tone should be good from your fingers and what's coming out of your amp. Anything else is a bonus." The guitarists specialise in combining slapback delays with longer quarter-note repeats. "We do a lot of soundscaping stuff," Josh explains. "It's never just a delay by itself."

Josh's modulation comes mainly from the Strymon Mobius. "We're loving tremolo at the moment, especially like the really choppy stuff where it's just a dead signal in the middle." For the single *Love Will Get You There*, Josh combined a swell from his Strymon Big Sky with the 8-bit mode on his Mobius. "It's just fun working with bit rates because it's not something you think to do on guitar."

The guitar sounds are all real amps, both live and in the studio. Josh records and plays live with a pair of AC30s. As Eli says: "A lot of bands are using Kempers live now but I don't know if we'd enjoy that." Josh agrees: "We probably will have to at some point, but you can't beat feeling the amp hit back at you."

The more muscular guitar sounds on *Cuts & Bruises* were also a conscious move. "On the first record we used a lot of single-coil stuff," Eli explains. "On this record we wanted a heavier sound. Gibsons are better for getting that fat, really gainy thing so that was what we leaned into." He recorded mainly with his Gibson ES-330, while Josh used a Fender Jaguar and an ES-335.

As for the future of guitar music, Eli has only positive thoughts. "Guitar has been around for so long but there's still so much more to play with," he says. "It seems to be coming back to the mainstream now. People are trying new things with it and making it sound different, which is really exciting."

"IF PEOPLE DON'T LIKE U2 THEY'RE CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO LIKE US!"
ELI HEWSON

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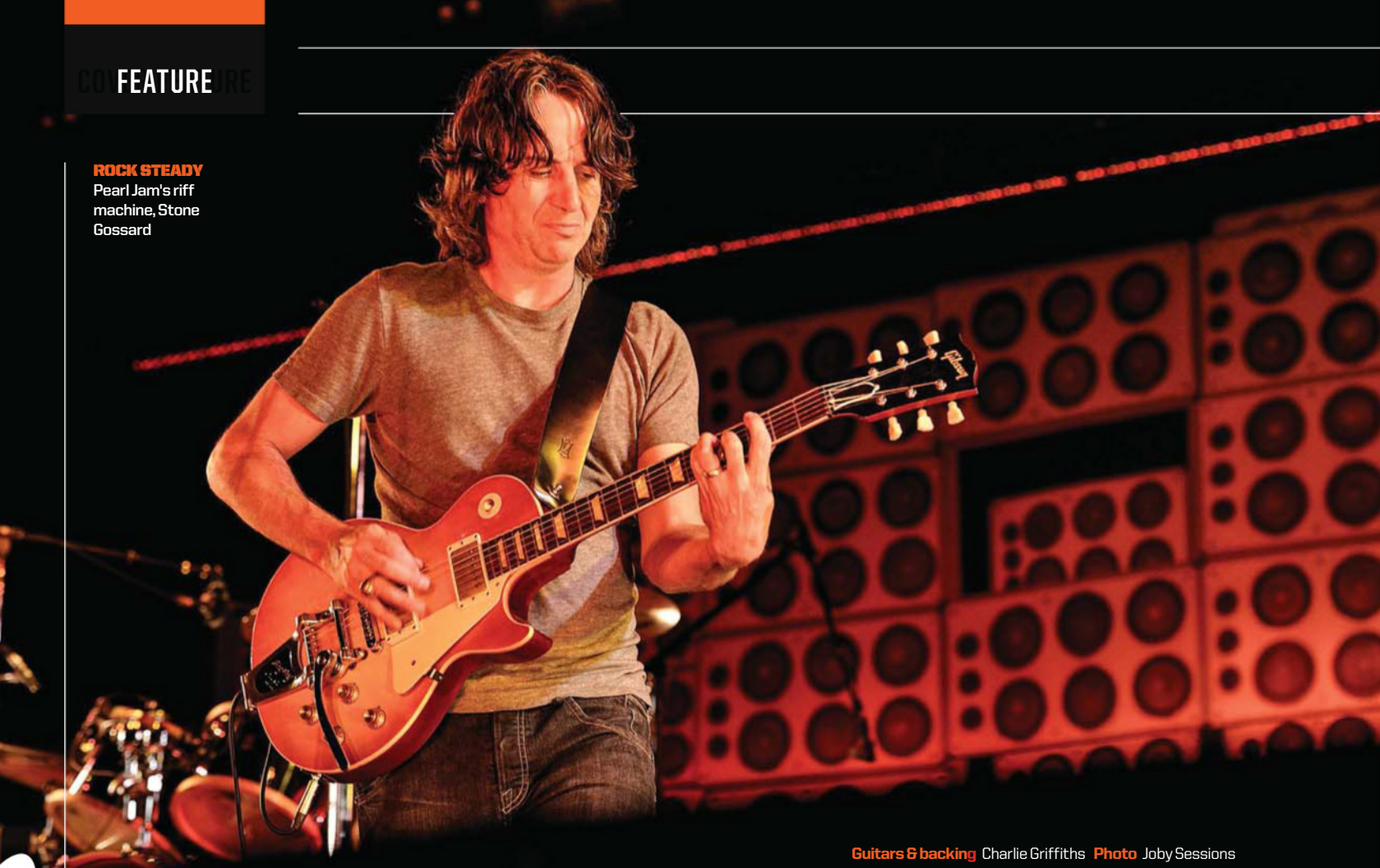


ROCK STEADY
Pearl Jam's riff machine, Stone Gossard

Guitars & backing Charlie Griffiths **Photo** Joby Sessions

ROCK RHYTHM WORKOUT

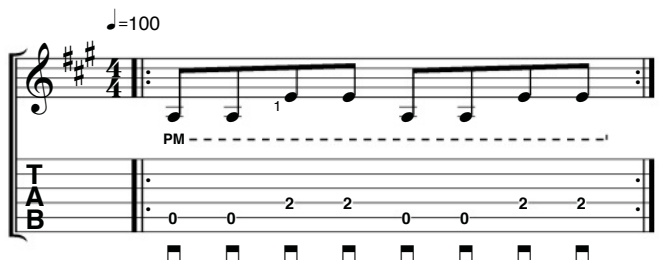
It's not the showiest aspect of guitar playing, but it's the skill that'll pay your bills – if you don't have it, you need it! Let TG show you how...

Every guitarist knows that facemelting licks and flash solos are our ticket to a moment in the limelight, but it's easy to forget that most songs see you playing rhythm for 90 per cent of the time. And that's assuming there's even a guitar solo at all.

Yes, take a deep breath, because we're here to tell you that being a solid rhythm player is way, way more important than burning up the fretboard.

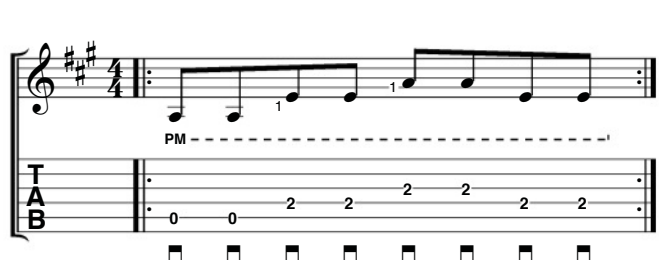
With that in mind, here, we've made it our mission to help you to hone your skills as an accompanist as we look at some of the tricks of the rhythm trade in rock and metal. You'll find a mix of workout style exercises that'll help you sharpen up your technique, plus some musical examples inspired by the rhythm guitar greats. It's up to you how you approach our examples but we recommend using the shorter ideas as simple warm-ups and technique drills, leaving the longer riffs as a slightly more in-depth guide to the styles of some well known players.

1 TWO-STRING DOWN PICKING — BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Hone your downpicking here with an exercise that switches between the fifth and fourth strings. Simply hold down an A5 powerchord and use palm-muting for a typical heavy rock sound.

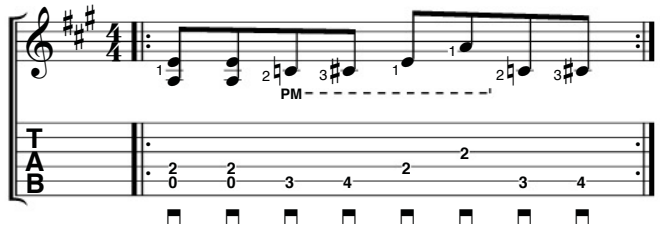
1 THREE-STRING DOWN PICKING — BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Here we're adding the third string into the mix. Play the downstrokes by moving your whole hand from the wrist and try to keep your thumb and first finger still to keep the pick angle consistent.

3 CLASSIC ROCK RIFFING

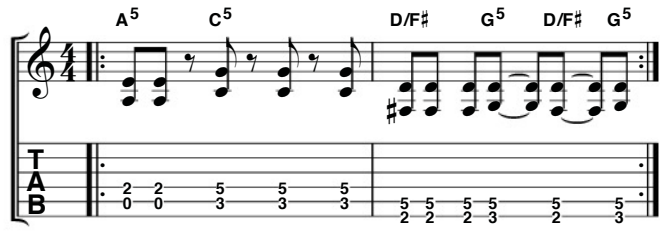
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



You can hear elements of classic rock acts such as Van Halen, Guns N' Roses and countless others here, as we use downpicking in a blues-rock riff.

4 EIGHTH-NOTE WORKOUT

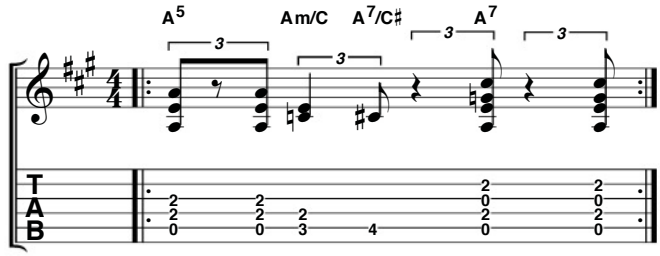
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Count through these two bars with eighth notes as follows: '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &'. The first chord lands on beat 1; the next four stabs coincide with the four '&'s.

5 EIGHTH-NOTE TRIPLETS

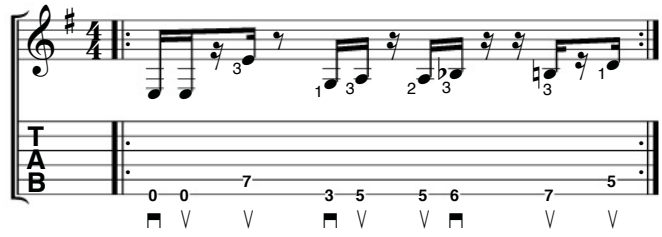
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



With triplets there are three notes per beat which are counted '1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a'. This riff uses mainly the first and third notes of each triplet.

6 16TH NOTES

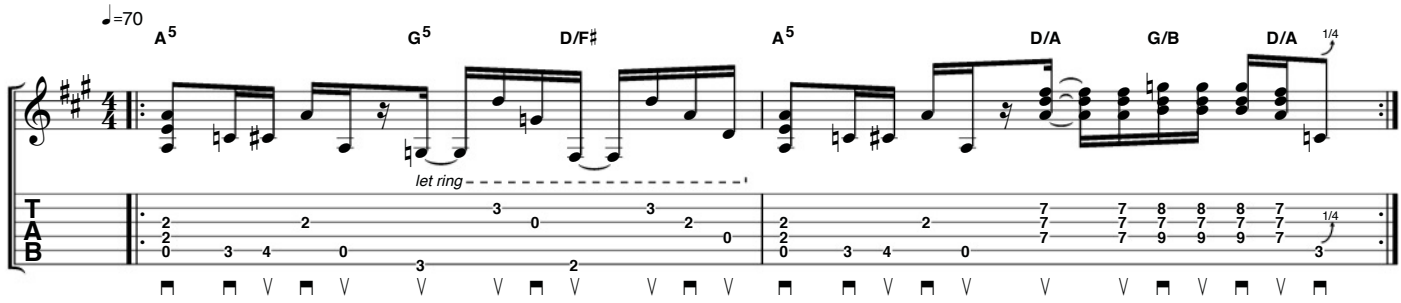
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Here the bar is divided into 16 even notes called '16th notes', counted '1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a'. Count try the bare rhythm first then see how the notes fit.

7 YOUNG ROCKS

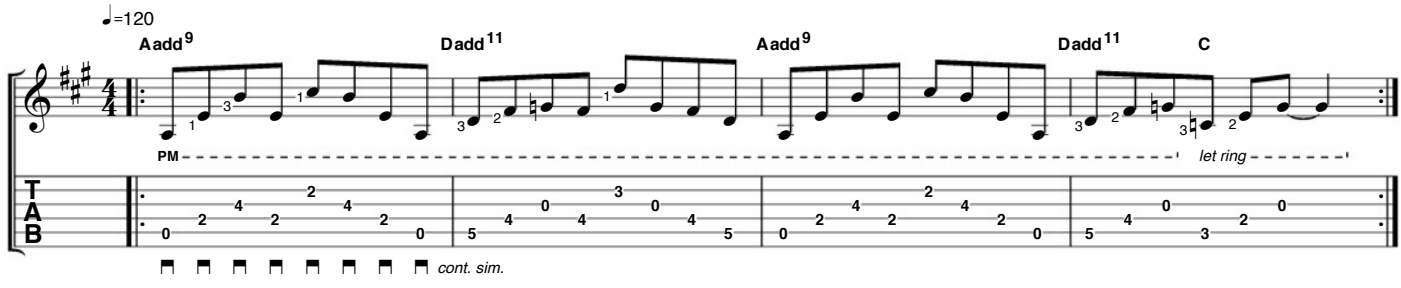
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



As AC/DC's rhythm machine Malcolm Young chopped away, usually on basic chords, Angus often overlaid a supporting arpeggio or riff, such as in bar 1 of our riff. And, to demonstrate just how much different players' styles can overlap, we're finishing off with a typical Brian May and Keith Richards change from D/A to G/B.

8 FIGHTING IN THE SUMMER

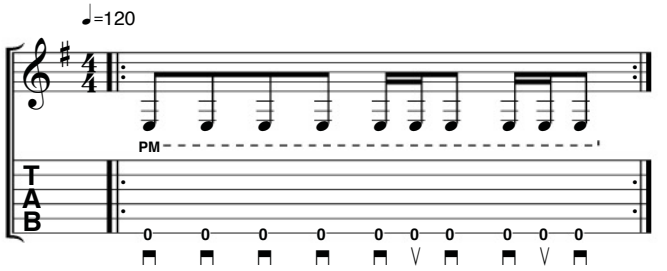
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



We're back to downpicking again here as we look at how players such as Andy Summers, Dave Grohl and Alex Lifeson use extended intervals to liven up basic major chords. Our progression essentially follows A-D-A-D-C, but the add9 and add11 shapes add a rich quality that makes them perfect for anthemic rock and power ballads.

9 THRASHY GALLOP

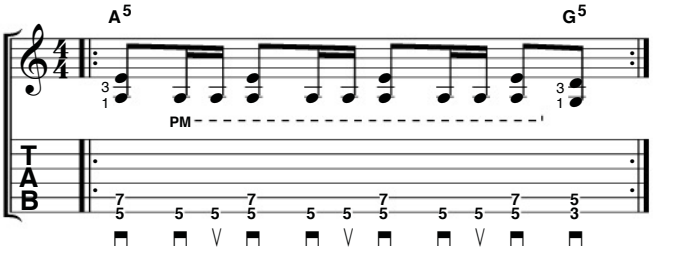
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



You need steady pick-hand timing to nail this typical Big Four-style thrash rhythm. Keep the rate of your downstrokes constant as you introduce the upstrokes in the second half of the riff.

10 CLASSIC GALLOP

BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



This is a classic Iron Maiden-style gallop rhythm, which has been adapted and altered in most sub-genres of metal. Once again, focus on keeping your downstrokes even throughout the riff.

11 POWERCHORD SLIDES

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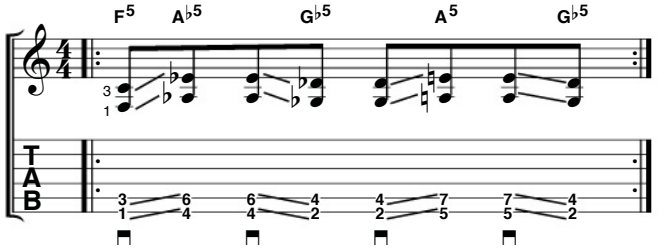
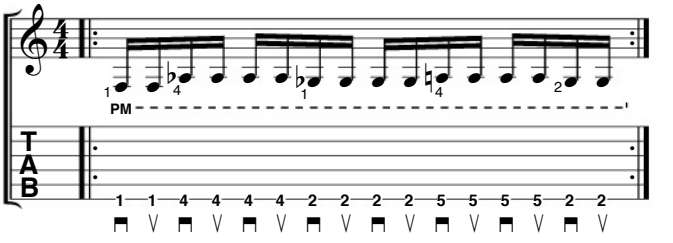


These Pantera- and Mastodon-style sliding powerchords are less choppy than the gallops; slick, decisive fretting moves are key to a tight sound. The old adage of practising slowly applies!

12 TIGHT PICKING

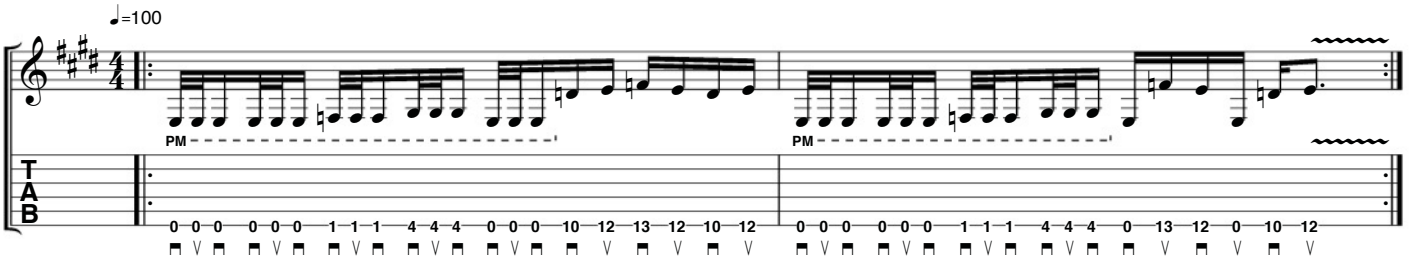
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



This exercise uses root notes from Example 11 played at double-speed with alternate picking and it's the kind of rhythm that's often played at speed, *Angel Of Death* style. Again, start slowly!

13 HETFIELD'S RIGHT ARM

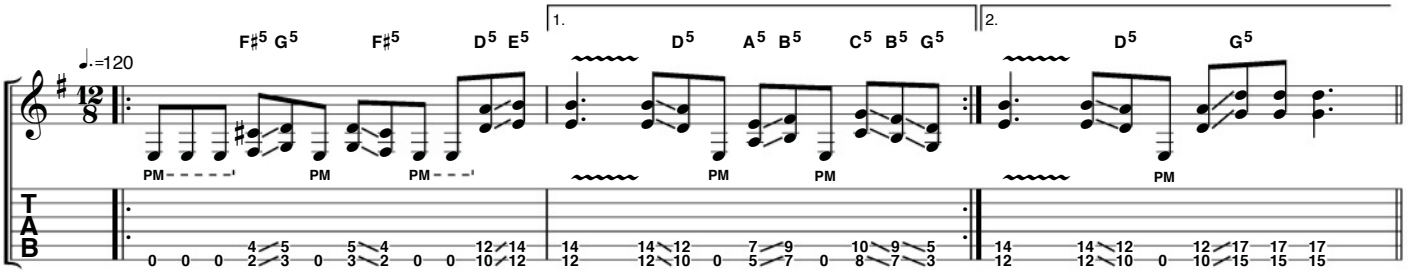
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



This kind of palm-muted gallop-style riff was popularised by thrash bands such as Metallica and Megadeth. Each 32nd-note gallop consists of three 'down up down' pick strokes in quick succession. There's a change in feel at the end of each bar as you switch to straight 16th notes and release the palm mute for more sustain.

14 DIME SLAYS THEM ALL

BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Fret the powerchords with either your first and third or first and fourth fingers – whichever is more comfortable, because your fret hand needs to be steady on the sliding shapes. Slides have the benefit of taking the pressure off your pick hand, giving you a moment to get your pick back into prime position.

I am music

I live through your moments
Your first shake of the rattle
Your recorder lesson
Your match day anthem
Your queueing anticipation
Your hands in the air
Your main stage mayhem
Your favourite movie scene
Your first dance
Your last night of the proms
Your family singalong
Your swan song.

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COVER FEATURE

THE Guitarist's Guitarist

A tribute to **Jeff Beck**

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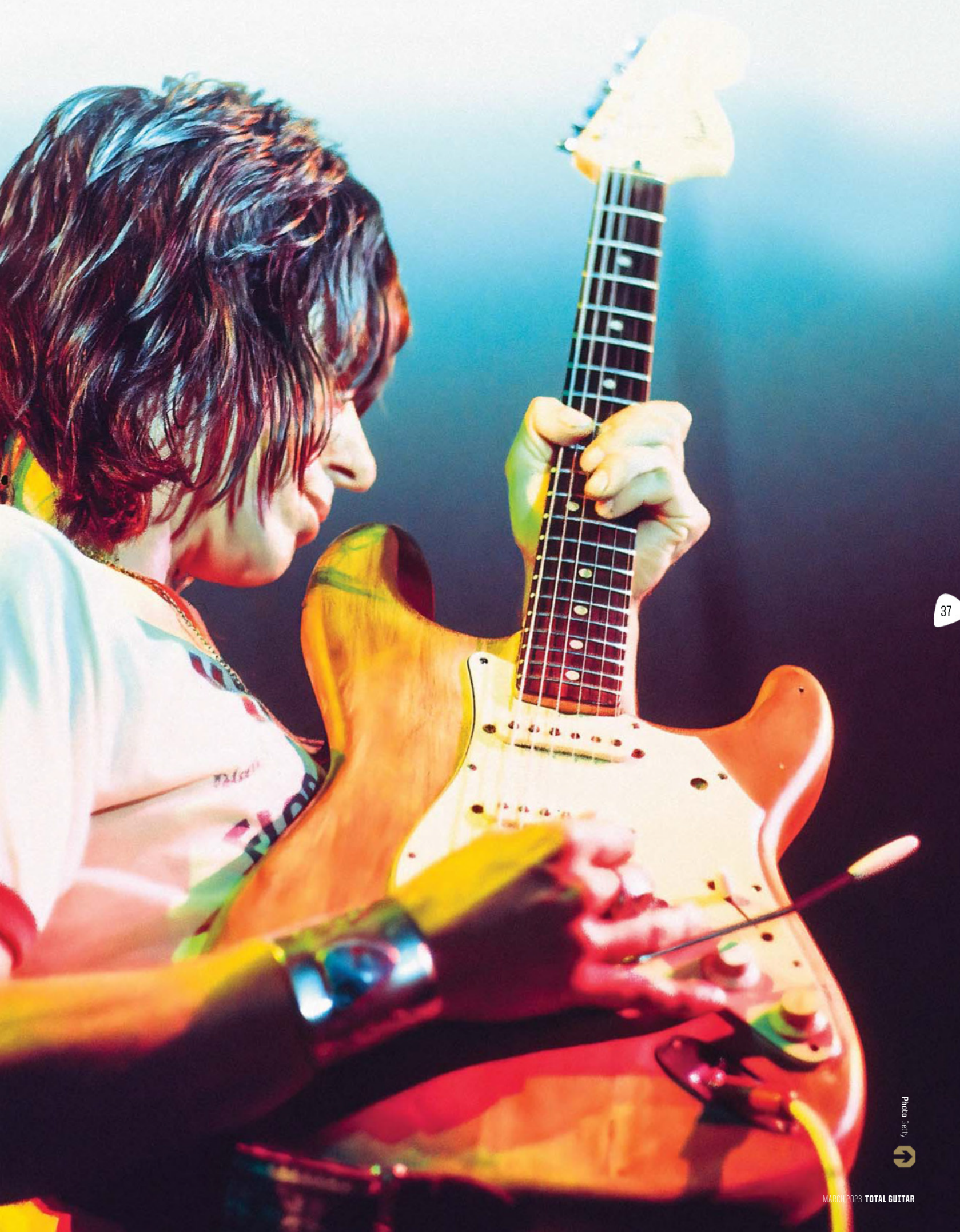


Photo Getty

Words Amit Sharma **Photography** Getty / Joby Sessions

"His technique unique. His imaginations apparently limitless"

The genius of **Jeff Beck** – the man who changed guitar music forever

Whenever guitar players talk about 'feel', everyone will ultimately have their own interpretation of what exactly the word means. It's an abstract and subjective term. However, most would agree that no player embodied 'feel' greater than Jeff Beck, the English virtuoso known as 'the guitarist's guitarist'.

Whether you loved the fierce sound of his Telecaster in The Yardbirds, those early 70s conquests with a Les Paul in his hands, or the Strat magic he was most commonly associated with, Beck's contributions to music of all kinds were simply incomparable.

His death on January 10, 2023, at the age of 78, is a profound loss to all who knew and loved him, and to all who were inspired by his playing and fearless creativity. And among the many tributes that followed his passing, each paying their respects to a musician who set the bar impeccably high, perhaps the greatest accolade came from Beck's close friend and former bandmate, Jimmy Page. "The six stringed Warrior is no longer here for us to admire the spell he could weave around our mortal emotions," Page stated. "Jeff could channel music from the ethereal. His technique unique. His imaginations apparently limitless. Jeff, I will miss you along with your millions of fans."

INNOVATOR. MAVERICK. GENIUS.

Jeff Beck was all this and more. And as we look back now on his extraordinary artistic life, we begin with the moment that his path was set – when, as a young boy listening to the radio, he was transfixed by the sound of an electric guitar, played by none other than Les Paul…

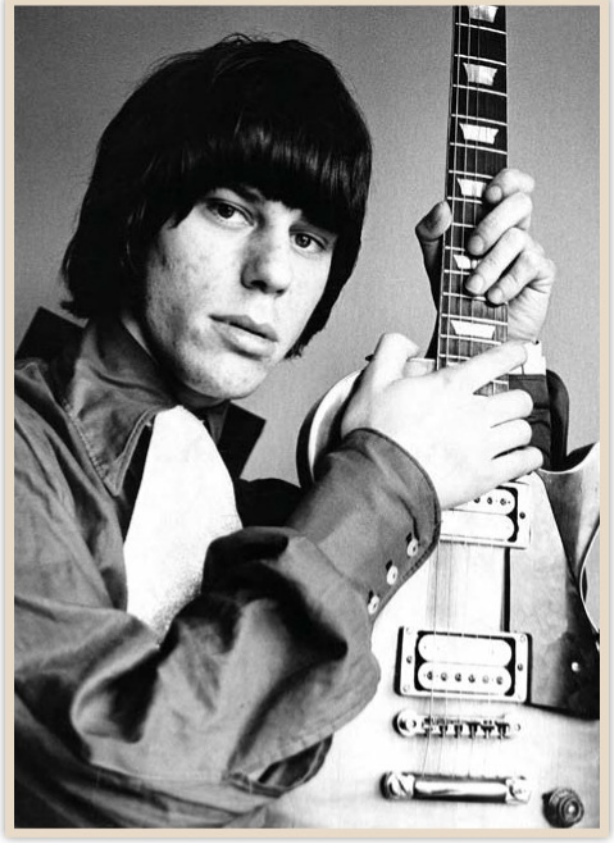
THE FIRST GUITAR

He was born Geoffrey Arnold Beck on June 24, 1944 at 206 Demesne Road in Wallington, on the borders of South London and Surrey. And his love affair with the guitar began early, at the age of six, when he heard Les Paul and Mary Ford's version of *How High The Moon*, prompting him to ask his mother about the slapback vibrations in between the vocals. By the time he was 10, he was heavily into the sound of rockabilly guitar, idolising the music of Gene Vincent And The Blue Caps with a particular emphasis on guitarist Cliff Gallup's contributions.

While learning to play on a borrowed guitar, he also experimented with building his own – gluing and bolting together cigar boxes with a fence post for the neck. For strings, he'd use thin wires from his model aeroplane collection, making tweaks and adjustments as he played through an old radio.

At the age of 16, Jeff landed an audition for The Bandits, who had a contract as backing group for singers impersonating the likes of Gene Vincent and Elvis Presley. To get the gig, he needed a proper instrument, and having pestered his parents for years, his wish came true in the form of a Guyatone LG-50 Strat copy.

In the early 60s, while attending the Wimbledon College of Art, Jeff would become a prolific player on the West London scene, cutting his teeth in groups such as Screaming Lord Sutch And The Savages, Nightshift, The Rumbles and The Tridents. But this, of course, was just a taste of what was to come…



RISING STAR Jeff Beck as a member of The Yardbirds in 1965.

JEFF, JIMMY AND ERIC

Beck rose to prominence in 1965 as the replacement for Eric Clapton in The Yardbirds – at the recommendation of Jimmy Page. Those three players would form ground zero of the British blues movement, fundamentally becoming the cornerstone of rock guitar. But both Page and Clapton would admit that Beck somehow had the upper hand, Clapton later referring to Beck as the world's "most unique player".

> "JEFF COULD CHANNEL MUSIC FROM THE ETHEREAL" JIMMY PAGE

Beck's brief 20-month tenure in The Yardbirds from March 1965 to November 1966 yielded the large majority of the group's Top 40 hits. He appeared on debut studio album *For Your Love*, although Clapton was responsible for most of the guitar work, and by the time its follow-up arrived at the end of '65 the tables had turned, with Beck appearing on more tracks than his predecessor, who by this point had exited. The following album *Roger The Engineer* would be the only release to feature Beck alone on guitar and the only Yardbirds record to appear in the UK album charts, thanks to the success of psychedelic lead single *Over Under Sideways Down*.

It was around this time that Beck recorded an instrumental he named *Beck's Bolero*, with Page on 12-string rhythm guitar, John Paul Jones (later of Led Zeppelin) on bass, Keith Moon of The Who on drums and Rolling Stones affiliate Nicky Hopkins on piano. "It was decided," Beck recalled, "that it would be a good idea for me to record some of my own stuff – partly to stop me moaning about The Yardbirds."

When Page joined Beck in The Yardbirds, the group had arguably the greatest guitar duo in rock 'n' roll history. But this dream team was not to last. Beck was given his marching at the end of 1966, allegedly for missing dates on their US tour.

DIGGING IN HARDER

Once out of The Yardbirds, Beck chose not to waste any time, releasing his debut single *Hi Ho Silver Lining* in 1967, with *Beck's Bolero* – interestingly credited to Page despite the name – serving as the B-side. With the wind in his sails, Beck recruited Rod Stewart on lead vocals and Ronnie Wood on bass as part of his backing band for his debut solo album *Truth*, recording once more with them for *Beck-Ola*, their 1969 debut as The Jeff Beck Group, before tapping up singer Bobby Tench, keyboardist Max Middleton and drummer Cozy Powell for two more albums under the same name. This line-up recorded 1971's *Rough And Ready* and the self-titled album of the following year.

Although Beck was only in his early to mid-twenties, these first major releases

THE CHANGING MAN
Posing with The Yardbirds, and (above) fronting the Jeff Beck Group between Rod Stewart and Ronnie Wood.

were concrete evidence that a guitar god had indeed arrived. He was able to express himself articulately with a very distinct voice on guitar – digging in harder and pushing himself further than other players of that time. Beck sounded meaner and angrier, bending harder and further, which only intensified his reputation as a hot-headed idealist. As he once explained: "I play the way I do because it allows me to come up with the sickest sounds possible... That's the point now, isn't it?"

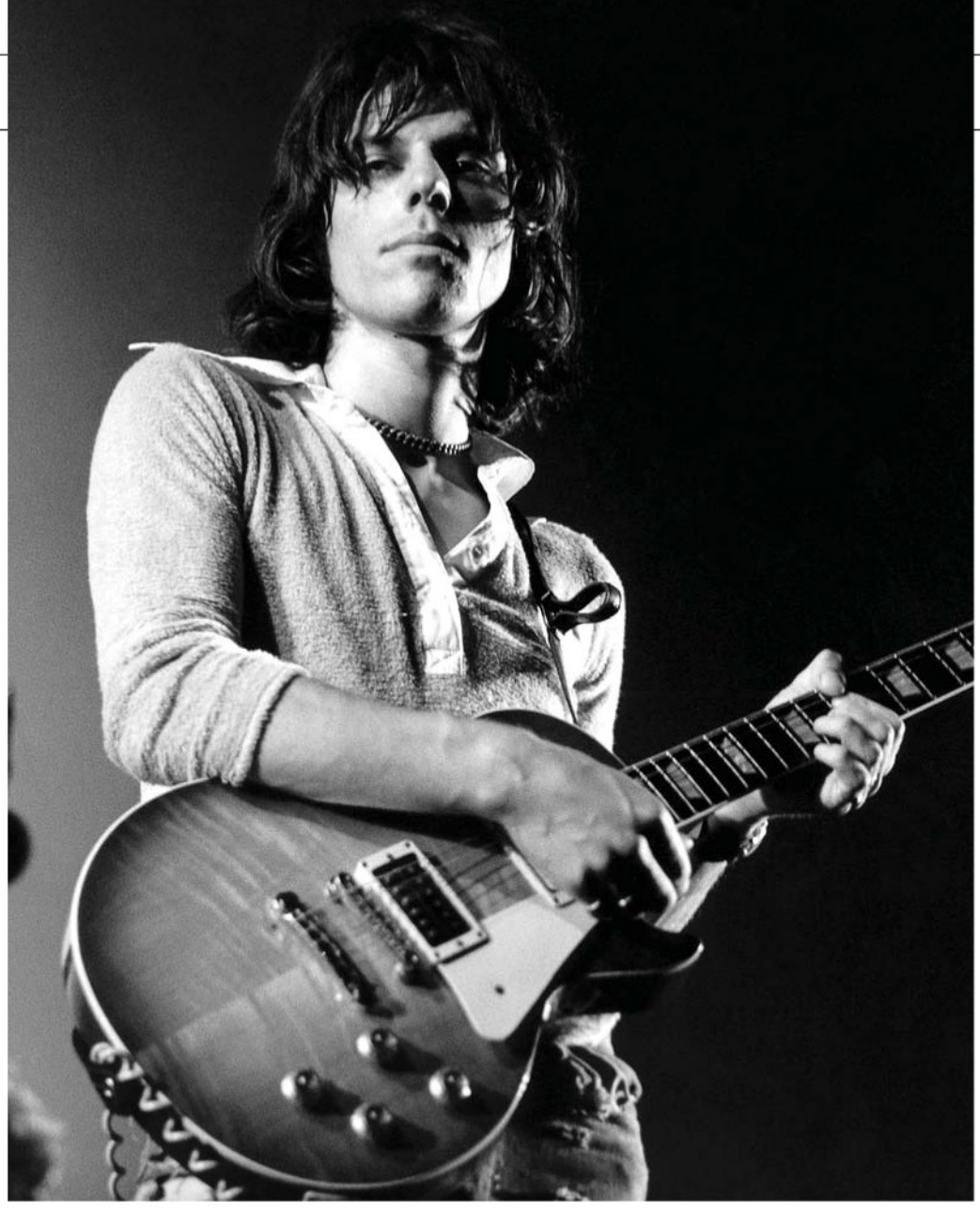
JEFF AND JIMI

Beck's Bolero, which he later stated was co-written with Page, features some of Jeff's most highly regarded slide work – exploring soaring melodies, atmospheric glides and everything in between – as well as some heavy metallic riffing which prefigured what Page would create with the first Led Zeppelin album in 1969.

Other highlights from this stage of Beck's career include two other tracks from *Truth* – *Shapes Of Things*, a reworking of The Yardbirds song, with incredible fuzzed-up leads, and a brilliant, wah-soaked version of Willie Dixon's blues standard *I Ain't Superstitious*. And from 1972's The Jeff Beck Group, the weeping six-string orchestra heard on *Definitely Maybe* and, perhaps most notably of all, the more experimental ad libs at the very forefront of *Going Down* – a near seven-minute G-minor blues which saw him declare war on his whammy bar in the most mesmerising of ways.

Some might even say the guitar work was reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix, and Hendrix was another who held Beck in high regard, to the point where he borrowed a riff from The Jeff Beck Group's *Rice Pudding* for his own song *In From The Storm* from *Cry Of Love*, the album he was working on in the weeks leading up to his death in September 1970.

In one of Beck's final interviews, when asked about Hendrix's homage to him, he said: "I can die happy."



GIMME SOME TRUTH
On stage with The Jeff Beck Group at the Newport Jazz Festival in Newport, Rhode Island on July 4, 1969.

BREAKING THE RULES

The greatest instrumental rock guitar albums may never have existed without Jeff Beck, such was his unwavering influence over the years. Have a think about your favourites – from Steve Vai's *Passion And Warfare* to Joe Satriani's *Flying In A Blue Dream*, as well as game-changing releases by Frank Zappa, Eric Johnson, Andy Timmons and Guthrie Govan. They all owe a debt to Beck's fearless attitude towards experimentation. "I don't care about the rules," Beck once said. "In fact, if I don't break the rules at least 10 times in every song, then I'm not doing my job properly. Emotion is much more important than making mistakes, so be prepared to look like a chump. If you become too guarded and too processed, the music loses its spontaneity and gut feeling."

Beck had established himself as a force to be reckoned with early on, being privately considered and even auditioned by rock 'n' roll heavyweights Pink Floyd and The Rolling Stones. But it was his second solo album, *Blow By Blow*, from 1975, that would arguably end up becoming his most defining release.

After he had split The Jeff Beck Group in 1972, his subsequent project was the supergroup

"IF YOU USE A PICK, YOU'VE GOT SEVERAL FINGERS WHICH ARE JUST REDUNDANT" JEFF BECK

POWER TRIO
Beck, Bogert & Appice rocking London, September 15, 1973.

Beck, Bogert & Appice, co-starring bassist Tim Bogert and drummer Carmine Appice, who had previously performed together in Vanilla Fudge and Cactus. The trio's sole, self-titled album, released in 1973, drew more from the funk and fusion world than Beck's previous recordings, particularly on tracks like *Jizz Whizz* and a version of Stevie Wonder's *Superstition*.

Beck had played on the track *Lookin' For Another Pure Love* from Wonder's 1972 album *Talking Book*. In return, Wonder had agreed to write a song for Beck, and also to allow the Beck, Bogert & Appice version of *Superstition* to be released first, but the latter idea was nixed after Wonder's label Motown sensed the potential for a hit. As an apology, Wonder gifted two songs to Beck for his *Blow By Blow* album – *Cause We've Ended As Lovers* and *Thelonius*, the latter on which Wonder would play clavinet.

In addition, as Beck plotted to take his creative vision to new levels, he enlisted producer George Martin, the so-called 'fifth Beatle', to produce the album, having been impressed by Martin's recent work on Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Apocalypse*. The results were astonishing.

The fusion-esque brilliance of opening track *You Know What I Mean* blurs into a reggae-inspired take on *She's A Woman* by The Beatles – Beck using the same talkbox effect that he'd wowed crowds with during live renditions of *Superstition* with Bogert and Appice. The Bag, a small unit made by Kansas company Kustom Electronics, was the first mass-market product of its kind, using a 30-watt driver in a speaker attached to a plastic tube held in the mouth, working like an artificial larynx – and in the process allowing guitarists to quite literally speak through their guitars, demonstrated by Beck jokingly telling his bandmates to 'Get your sh*t together!' via the pentatonic scale on the live version of *Black Cat Moan*. "It took me about three or four days to get some of the vowel sounds out," he told *Guitar World* in 2009. "Amplified through a mic… it would just floor people. They'd go, 'What the hell's that?' Then they'd see this sort of colostomy bag stuck to me. In fact, there was a review where the writer thought it was a bladder!"

Blow By Blow was also notable for being the last album made before Beck fully committed himself to the Strat. The 'Oxblood' Les Paul that he'd used as his main guitar – as seen on the cover art painted by John Collier – was actually a refinished 1954 Goldtop, with its original P-90s swapped out for full-size humbuckers and its neck made thinner. The guitar had been bought from Memphis store Strings And Things, its original owner supposedly unhappy

with the mods. In 2009, the Gibson Custom Shop made a limited run of 150 signature 'Oxblood' Les Pauls in the same dark brown finish, the first 50 of which were signed, numbered and played by Beck himself. "The Les Paul has a big powerful sound that no other guitar has – it just sounds rich," he commented around the time of release.

But it wasn't the only guitar heard on the album. The song *Air Blower* features some of the most exquisite creative surprises on the record, and given its out-of-phase tones and keyboard-like vibrato, a Strat must have been in Beck's hands. Beck also revealed that *Cause We've Ended As Lovers* had been played on his 1959 Telecaster loaded with Seymour Duncan humbuckers, often referred to as his "Tele-Gib".

Other key tracks included *Scatterbrain*, a darker take on the progressive fusion heard elsewhere on the album thanks to its menacing and meandering chromatics, and *Freeway Jam*, a heavy and psychedelic Strat boogie in G-minor, intensified by his Colorsound Overdrive going into a Marshall at full pelt. By the time you get to the end of eight and a half-minute jazz noir odyssey *Diamond Dust*, you realise he's slowly but surely taken you on a trip to a distant yet strangely familiar world. All in all, it's the kind of record that leaves a long-lasting impression every time you hear it. Bolstered by Beck's youthful and at time playful bravado, it's a magnum opus that can easily hold any listener's attention, regardless of whether they play guitar or not.

HEAVY MACHINERY
"The Les Paul has a big, powerful sound that no other guitar has," Jeff said.

THE STRATOCASTER

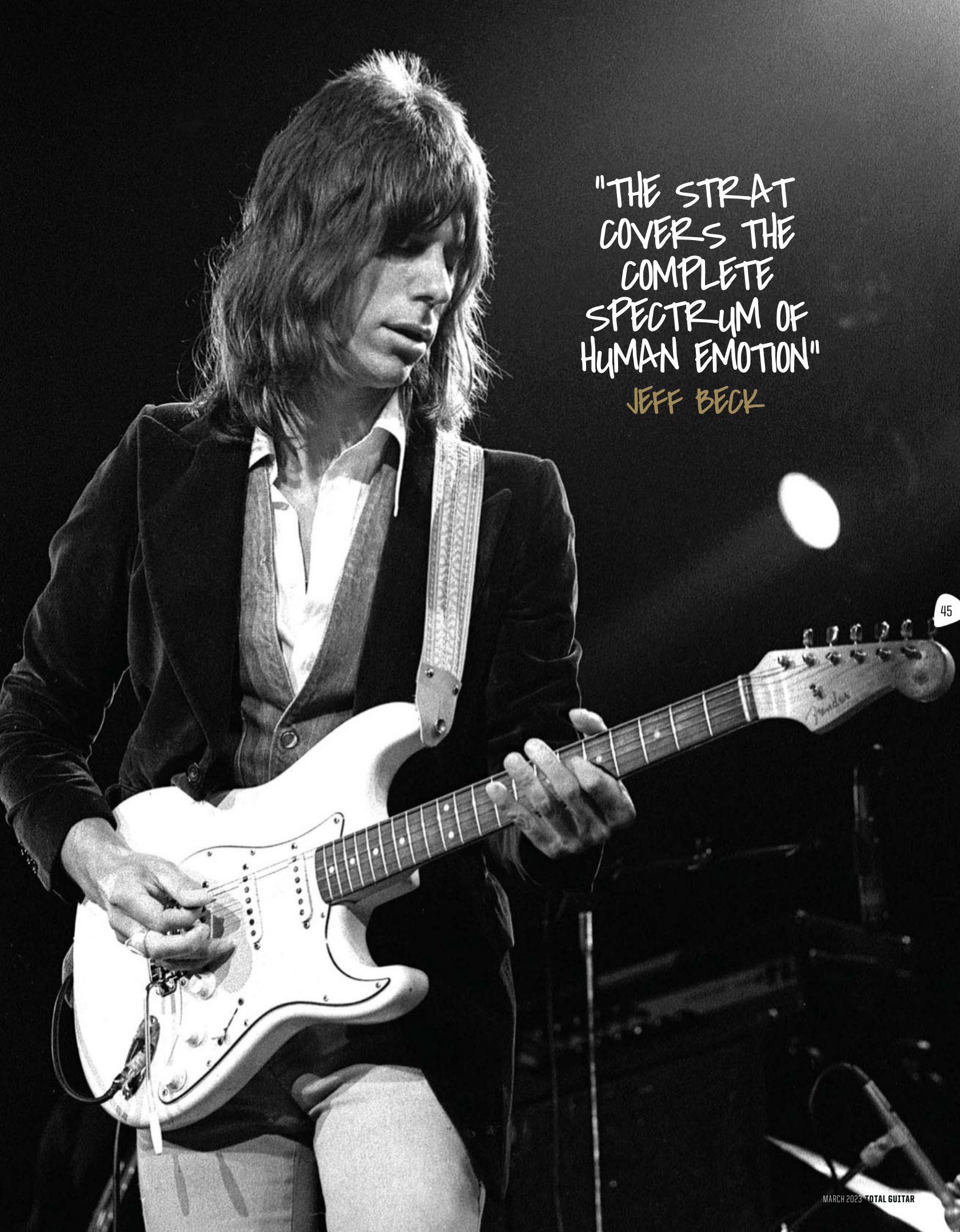
Beck's third solo album, *Wired*, was released in 1976 as the follow-up to *Blow By Blow*, and is often regarded its a sister album. Produced again by George Martin, this also one of Beck's most universally admired releases.

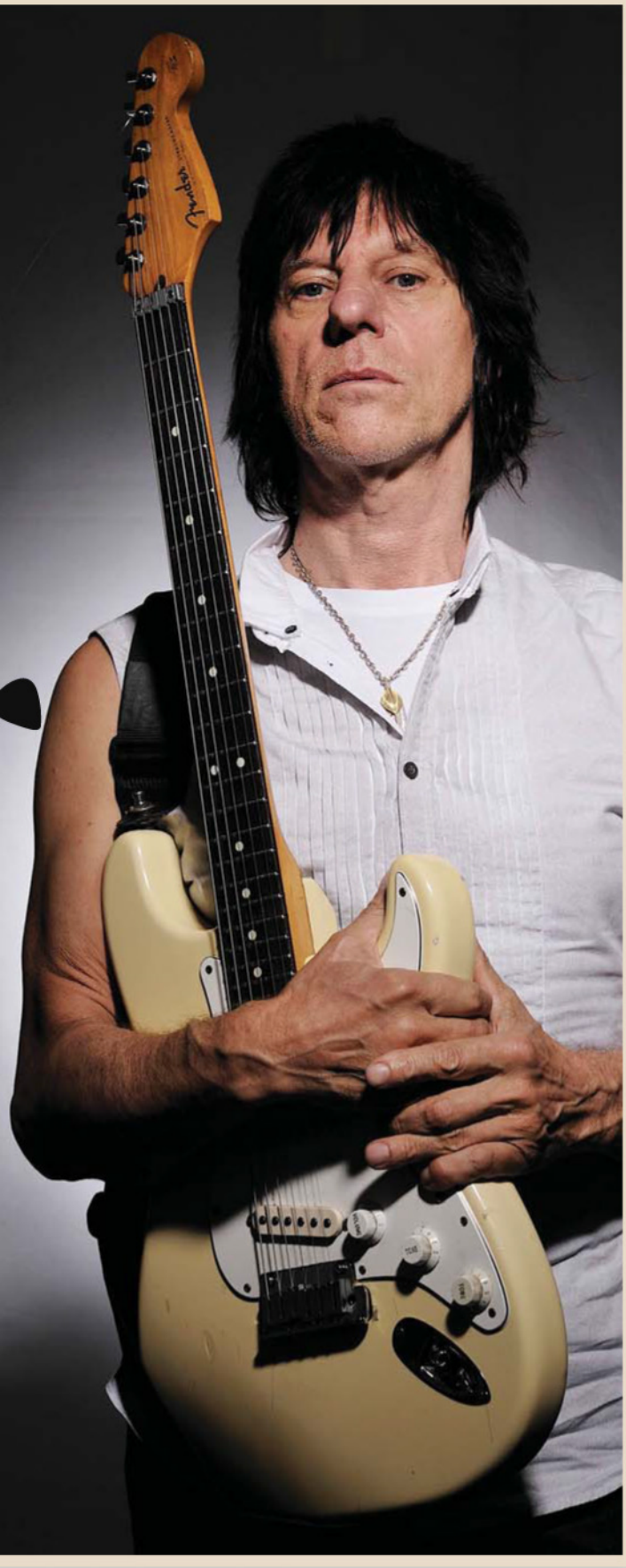
Interestingly, he didn't write a single track on it – most of the credits going to newly recruited band members including drummer Narada Michael Walden, Mahavishnu Orchestra synth virtuoso Jan Hammer and bassist Wilbur Bascomb, save for a cover of jazz standard *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* composed by jazz pioneer Charles Mingus in remembrance of saxophonist Lester Young. At a time when it was common for guitar players to assume a mastermind role in their projects, let alone on their solo releases, Beck had a refreshing take on creativity – allowing his ears to dictate where the music came from with little concern for writing credits and massaging egos.

In his 2016 autobiography *Beck 01* and 2018 documentary *On The Run*, he revealed that he had received a letter from Charles Mingus, praising his interpretation of the song. "Dear Jeff, it knocked me out to hear what you did," Mingus wrote. This track also had some interesting usage of effects, most likely a Maestro Ring Modulator and Octavia-style fuzz used sparingly to help give a lick or two their own distinctive voice – which was symptomatic of his attitude towards effects in general, with little used on the regular aside from wah, delay and reverb. "I try to become a singer," he revealed in 2010. "The guitar has always been abused with distortion units and funny sorts of effects, but when you don't do that and just let the genuine sound come through, there's a whole magic there."

As opening gambits go, *Led Boots* is undoubtedly one of Beck's finest – built around an up-tempo jam in G Mixolydian with more extreme whammy bar work, as teased by the Strat gracing the album cover this time round. The Oxblood Les Paul had now been relegated to the rear side of the sleeve and the tones at the heart of the music were noticeably brighter and slinkier.

From this point onwards, aside from dabbling with Jackson Soloists in the mid-80s on fifth solo album *Flash* and his contributions to Tina Turner's


"THE STRAT COVERS THE COMPLETE SPECTRUM OF HUMAN EMOTION"
JEFF BECK



Private Dancer record, the Strat would serve as his primary conduit for musical expression, effectively becoming the voice he'd speak to the world through. "The Strat covers the complete spectrum of human emotion," he once explained, noting how "the tremolo enables you to do anything, you can hit any note known to mankind".

Come Dancing, the second track on *Wired*, is centred around a funk vamp going from D minor to B♭7, allowing Beck to occasionally deviate from D blues and into the B♭ Lydian Dominant scale for a melodic minor twist. There's also a lower octave effect that gets kicked in for the first solo, most likely coming from either a Mu-Tron Octave Divider or a Colorsound Octivider, and some heavy delay for the second lead section. Composed by Jan Hammer, *Blue Wind* stands as one of the album's more experimental offerings, starting off in G Lydian and then shifting into E Dorian blues, welding different techniques like country bends and natural harmonics into one truly unique musical statement. It sets the tone well for the album's fusion-led second side, with six and a half minute epic *Sophie* taking the listener on a journey through the melancholic and subdued to high-octane thrills, before the heavily syncopated *Play With Me* tees things up for the breathtaking acoustic and piano-led closer *Love Is Green*.

Beck was often reminded how his two mid-70s masterpieces were widely considered to be as good as it gets for instrumental guitar, but he remained humbly grounded throughout the course of his career. "Things turn out better by accident sometimes," he once admitted. "But you can't organise accidents."

ALWAYS MOVING...

By the end of the 70s, Jeff Beck could have easily rested on his laurels. He certainly didn't need to prove anything, yet he had plenty left to say. His fourth solo album *There & Back*, released in 1980, was also packed to the rafters with stunning fretwork. Highlights include the Jan Hammer-penned opening track *Star Cycle*, which sounded more electronic and futuristic, chronicling the excitement of a new decade soundtracked by advances in keyboard technology. Then there's *The Pump*, which witnesses Beck snake his way around the fretboard over a down-tempo vamp in E, switching over to B♭ Aeolian for the key changes before returning back. Though it builds and builds over the course of its five minutes and 50 seconds, it's a great example of how Jeff refused to overplay and was able to retain an air of suspense and mystery in moments where others would have been drawn out into the open. *Space Boogie*, on the other hand, documents Beck at his rhythmically most urgent, providing a fitting contrast against the minimalist magnificence of outro *The Final Peace*.

PURE FINGERSTYLE

Beck made only three solo albums in the 1980s, but he was highly prolific as a session guitarist during these years, lending his talents to recordings by Mick Jagger, Diana Ross and Malcolm McLaren, as well as rekindling his creative relationship with Rod Stewart – guesting on three tracks from the singer's 1984 album *Camouflage* and Stewart repaying the favour on *People Get Ready*, the final single from Beck's Nile Rodgers-produced *Flash* record.

It was also in this period that he decided to ditch the pick entirely, making the move from hybrid playing to purely fingerstyle – the earthy grit of skin on string quite literally putting him at one with his instrument, with no barrier in between. As he said at the time: "If you use a pick, you've got several fingers which are just redundant, they're not doing anything, but with five fingers you can do all kinds of stuff."

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GUITAR MUSIC EVER RECORDED..."

While *Flash* was the sound of Beck returning to vocal-led music, save for two instrumentals – one of which winning the guitarist his first Grammy – its 1989 follow-up saw him going back the other way. To be perfectly honest, with a title like *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop* and the cover art depicting him working on a giant Strat suspended from above like a mechanic, it could only ever have been centred around his unearthly guitar playing.

The album's crowning moment would be the eerie masterpiece *Where Were You*, which saw Beck brazenly

flaunting his innate control over the instrument – using the whammy bar to echo the fluidity of the human voice with infinite panache. The first time he strikes the D note on the 19th fret of his G-string, it's fretted as per the other notes in the sequence. But every other D note is performed using the natural harmonic found in the exact same position, ultimately providing the seemingly endless sustain for his extreme pitchshifting on that final note – which sees him pulling up a whole step, then diving down a step and a half, returning to pitch, diving down one and a half, pulling up a whole step from there, then descending two whole steps and pulling to a step up from there. All served up in a glorious wash of reverb and delay, it's easy to see why this quickly became a live favourite.

As Beck's latter-era bassist Tal Wilkenfeld once told this writer: "He just sings through his guitar. Just listen to him playing *Where Were You*… that was always my favourite song in the set. I would just stand there on the side of the stage with my jaw on the floor every time." It's a song that also made a long-lasting impression on Brian May, who recently referred to it as "possibly the most beautiful bit of guitar music ever recorded", praising Beck's "depth of emotion and sound and phrasing" and highlighting "the way he could touch your soul".

Other talking points from the *Guitar Shop* album included *Big Block* – which, despite Beck distancing himself from the heavy metal movement, showcased one of his most forceful and thundering riffs – and *Two Rivers*, played completely using natural harmonics and the whammy bar for pitch-shifting and vibrato, somehow managing to champion simplicity and wild invention at the same time.

THE DAREDEVIL

Arriving a whole decade after his previous solo album, 1999's *Who Else!* was indeed worth the wait. Instead of stagnating in the same 12-bar format he started out with, or even continuing down the jazz-rock fusion sound he adopted from John McLaughlin, this album saw Beck reinventing himself as a contemporary artist. Which is why tracks like *What Mama Said*, *Psycho Sam*, *Blast From The East* and *THX138* sound more like The Prodigy or The Chemical Brothers than the nostalgic yearnings of a rock 'n' roll veteran from the mid-60s.

Given his profile at this stage in his career, it can't have been easy signing off on these tracks – doing things that his peers would never have dared to – but that's precisely what made Beck such an artistic force, unafraid to gamble and taking risks others would have deemed too precarious. This is also evident in his whammy bar technique, through which he would pull and push his way into infinity, with no real guarantee as to whether his guitar would still be in tune by the end.

Jackson Soloists aside, Beck chose to continue using Strats with a vintage two-point tremolo system long after the invention of the Floyd Rose, which was designed for players requiring tuning stability to compensate for all their extreme divebombs and harmonic screams. While Eddie Van Halen, Joe Satriani and Steve Vai would harness these double-locking units with truly game-changing results, Beck chose to put all his trust in one of the earliest electric guitar designs and simply hope for the best. He was a daredevil in every sense of the term, unafraid of failure in his search for unique otherworldly greatness. "I like an element of chaos in music," he admitted in 2014. "That feeling is the best thing ever, as long as you don't have too much of it. It's got to be in balance. I just saw Cirque du Soleil, and it struck me as complete organised chaos. If I could turn that into music, it's not far away from what my ultimate goal would be, which is to delight people with chaos and beauty at the same time."

Perhaps the most enduring track from the *Who Else!* release is *Brush With The Blues*, a down-tempo shuffle in B♭ minor in which he'd scoop in and out of notes almost as if his strings were made out of liquid, and gargling others by flicking the whammy bar, allowing it to warble like a ruler on the edge of a desk. In many ways, it's a track that encapsulates his genius better than any other, leaving the listener on the edge of their seat throughout its captivating six and a half minutes of improvisation, marvelling at how its architect is capable of pulling the most magical notes out of thin air. When we talked about 'feel' at the very beginning of this tribute – well, look no further. Even this late in his career, 35 years on from joining The Yardbirds, he was releasing music that could very well have been his finest. *Angel (Footsteps)* is another fan-favourite and would end up appearing on many a setlist following its release, with the guitarist opting to say more with less using just a slide and all his higher frequencies rolled off. What he does play, however, is as magical as it gets.

THE MAN AND HIS STRAT
Left: Jeff pictured in London on May 13, 2009.

THE PABLO PICASSO OF GUITAR

At the dawn of a new millennium, Beck chose to up his game and release a lot more solo material than he had managed to in the decades prior. 2000's *You Had It Coming* heralded yet more electronic experimentation, as evidenced on the drum 'n' bass beats for key tracks like *Earthquake*, *Nadia* and *Rosebud* – again, showing how he was unafraid to take his guitar in new directions that no one else would have thought of. This was followed by 2003's ninth studio record, simply titled *Jeff*, which would see him win his fourth Best Rock Instrumental Grammy with the track *Plan B*.

It was around this time that Beck chose to revamp his signature Fender Stratocaster. The original model, in production from 1990 to 2001, featured a chunky U-shaped neck and Lace Sensor Gold pickups – two singlecoils in the neck and middle, plus a humbucking Dually in the bridge

"MY ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO DELIGHT PEOPLE WITH CHAOS AND BEAUTY AT THE SAME TIME" JEFF BECK

– available in Surf Green, Vintage White and Midnight Purple. The second version, which was available from 2001 onwards and remains in production to this day, features a slimmer C-shaped neck and Fender's Hot Noiseless ceramic magnet single-coils, with standard tone controls instead of the original model's TBX circuit and coil-splitting functions, and the Wilkinson roller nut swapped out for an LSR equivalent. A Custom Shop model was launched in 2004 with identical specs to the 2001 revamp and also remains part of the Fender line.

Of his final albums, perhaps its 2010's *Emotion & Commotion* that best demonstrates Beck going out on a high. It's an album that saw him reaching far back into the past and finding beauty in songs that had nothing to do with guitar music whatsoever. His interpretation of Harold Arlen's *Over The Rainbow*, originally written for Judy Garland in her starring role in the 1939 film *The Wizard Of Oz*, is emotive to the point where it would often reduce members of the crowd to tears when performed live. His ability to reproduce the melody using the whammy bar and his fingers will forever be the very epitome of touch dynamics – showing just how much ground a guitarist can cover with one simple sound and living very much in the moment. The volume control would play a huge part in this, allowing him to roll back his lead tone into more subtle cleans and then back to full-fat overdrive whenever he saw fit.

FINE ART
The Picasso of guitar, performing in Santa Rosa, California on August 17, 2016.

Similarly, his heart-stirring rendition of *Nessun Dorma*, the aria from Puccini's opera *Turandot*, most famously performed by Luciano Pavarotti, is a revelation in itself – highlighting a delicate vulnerability that had never been quite heard before. It's no wonder Slash would often think of Beck as "the Pablo Picasso of guitar".

Emotion & Commotion was also noteworthy for its usage of the female voice, with the likes of Joss Stone, Imelda May and Olivia Safe duetting with his own profoundly lyrical six-string melodies. In fact, unlike the large majority of his peers, Beck had regularly championed younger female musicians, such as Canadian bassist Rhonda Smith (who also worked with Prince), Jennifer Batten (who played lead guitar on all of Michael Jackson's world tours from 1987 to 1997) and Australian bassist Tal Wilkenfeld (who was barely in her 20s when Beck poached her from Chick Corea's band). In the 2018 documentary *On The Run*, Rhonda Smith noted how the guitarist had "a really cool knack" for picking female musicians "that go with his style and the type of energy that he wants to portray" and ultimately "the type of fire he wants to have".

His last studio album as a solo artist, 2016's *Loud Hailer*, saw him recruit Rosie Bones and Carmen Vandenberg from London group Bones UK – quite extraordinary given how both musicians were still in their 20s and fairly green while he was well on the way to his mid-70s after decades at the very top of his game.

His final recordings, released in 2021, would be for two tracks on Ozzy Osbourne's album *Patient Number 9*, and the *18* collaboration with actor Johnny Depp, re-examining famous works by The Beach Boys, Killing Joke and Marvin Gaye. The fact he'd wrapped up a US tour with Depp little over two months before his untimely passing shows just how unexpectedly it came.

In the end, there is such sadness to think that never again will the world witness Jeff Beck play *Cause We've Ended As Lovers* or *Brush With The Blues*, furiously punishing his guitar in those transcendental airy moments after so beautifully caressing it. But we have to be grateful. He gave us so much. The world is well and truly in his debt.

WELCOME TO THE SLINKY FAMILY

ERNIE BALL®

SINCE 1962

Words Jenna Scaramanga Photos Kevin Nixon

"THERE'S ALL OF US OTHER GUITAR PLAYERS AND THEN THERE'S BECK"

The master, the pupil and a treasured friendship...

by Joe Perry of Aerosmith

The Teacher

For Your Love was the first Yardbirds song I remember, and then *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago* and those songs where he was using a Fuzztone for the first time. Those songs came out around the same time as [The Rolling Stones classic] *Satisfaction*, and they're pretty close as far as using a Fuzztone goes. I would try to figure out licks from the records. I just know I was never really that good at it! *Train Kept a-Rollin'* was the first song that I tried to play, but it ended up sounding like Aerosmith. I was lucky enough to have some friends who had older brothers who had records – and not the original but one of the one of the ever-evolving versions of *Train Kept a-Rollin'* by Johnny Burnette. That really helped me figure out what was driving these English blues-rock things. Some of the early Jeff Beck stuff I could come close to. Definitely I was always trying, and at least his influence was always there.

The hand of God

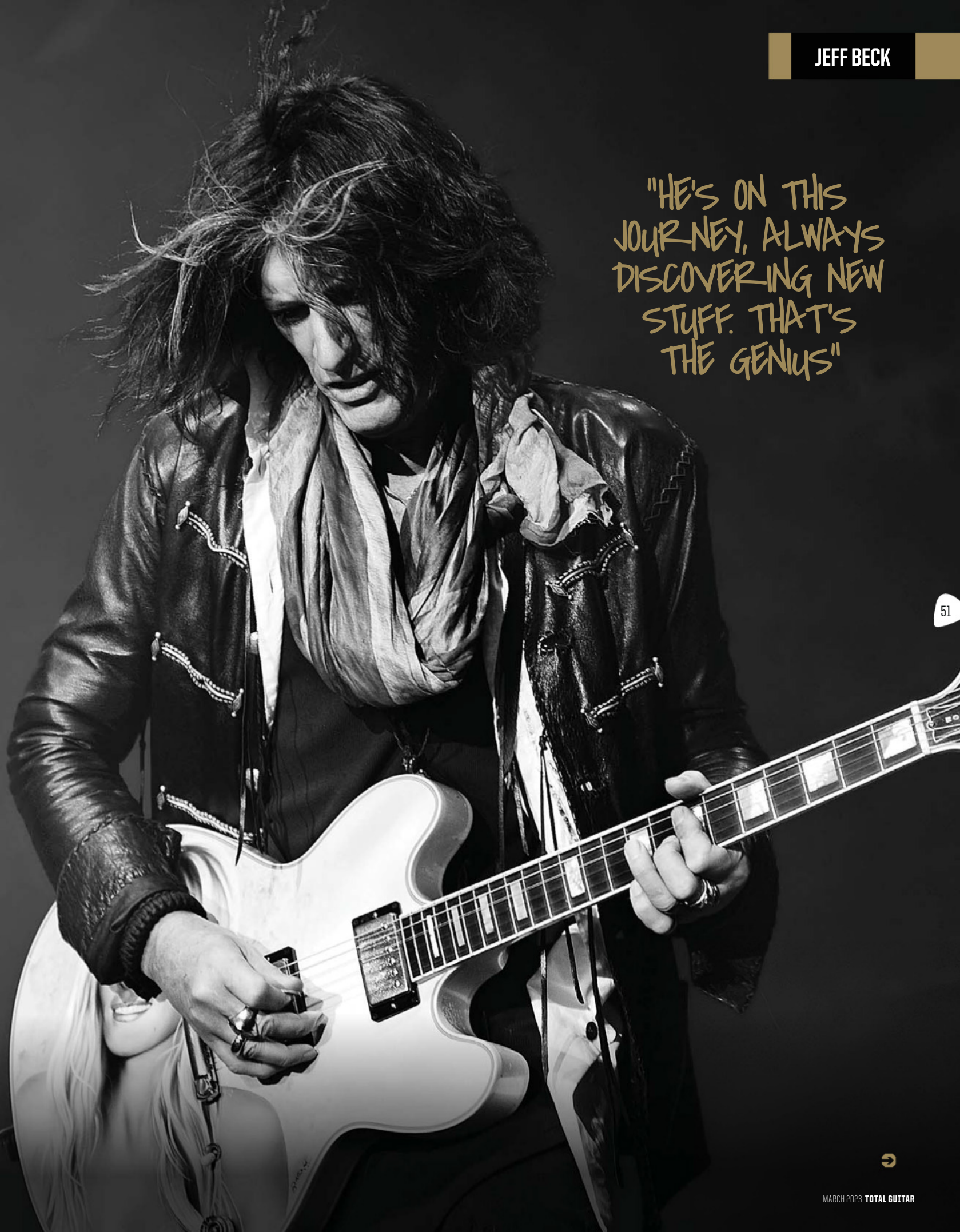
I was a fan for a long time before I even got to really meet him. I was 18 or 19 on that first Jeff Beck tour. I was at the stage door waiting for him to come out; I was the only one standing there after seeing him play at the Boston Tea Party. He came out alone with his guitar case in his hand, and I said, 'I have to shake your hand.' I told him he was the best in the world, and that was the first time I met him. I know he doesn't remember it because I asked him about it many years later. I always think about that first time that I shook his hand, before Aerosmith, when I was just one more kid in the in the audience. I'd heard things about him in the press that he could be really moody, and he still stopped for a second, looked me in the eye and said, 'Thanks a lot, man.' I thought about that moment as time went on and our band got lucky enough to get some success.

Jeff plays while Rome burns!

In '76 we did a run of dates. I think it was Rick Derringer first on the bill, and Jeff Beck and then Aerosmith. I always felt really strange about that, with Jeff going on before us. Somebody got word to him that it was my birthday and he came out and played *Train Kept a-Rollin'* with us. I think it was Comiskey Park [Chicago baseball stadium] because that was the gig where when he was playing and part of the stands caught on fire. It was really hot out, and of course back then they didn't stop the show, they'd just kind of move people away. We're all joking like, 'Jeff plays while Rome burns!' We went through our encore and *Train Kept a-Rollin'* and then he was gone. It was great. I really felt honoured.

His own man

We played with Guns N' Roses when they were starting to get rolling. It was after they opened for us. It was great watching that happen because it's the most exciting time in any band, when you realise you're not just trying to fill the club with your friends. In '92 they were playing the racetrack in Paris. There were 100,000 people or something, and they invited me and Steven [Tyler] and Jeff to play *Train Kept a-Rollin'*. It meant us doing dropping everything and getting on a plane, but of course we would do it. It's one of those things you just do. At the soundcheck I really didn't talk to Jeff much. I don't think he liked the sound he was getting at the sound check. I knew it was bound to be a lot of fun, and again Guns N' Roses are a great band. We did went through the soundcheck, and the next day Jeff's gear was gone. I said, 'Where's Jeff?' I mean, that's kind of the reason I wanted to do this. They said, 'Well, he wasn't feeling right about it so he went home.' There were the stories about leaving a tour with The Yardbirds and that kind of thing, but it was the first time that that side of his personality touched me. But the soundcheck was fun. I thought it sounded good, but he is what he is. When you're going on to somebody else's stage like that you have to have to adapt a little bit to what they're doing. You don't have the same kind of control as when it's your own gig, so I wasn't surprised. When you go and jam with somebody you want it to be as good as it can be, but very often you're not using your own amp. Playing outdoors like that in a huge arena, you've really got to feel comfortable with it if you're gonna do your best, and that's what Jeff's all about.



"HE'S ON THIS JOURNEY, ALWAYS DISCOVERING NEW STUFF. THAT'S THE GENIUS"

The introvert

When Jeff was inducted as a solo artist into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2009, we started talking more. He was a pretty introverted kind of guy until you spend some time with him.

The stolen guitar

When we were just starting to make it in Aerosmith, our manager had been one of the big promoters in Boston and so we were able to get tickets and backstage passes to a Jeff Beck show. We had a road manager who was a great guy, but he just looked at the world a little different. Backstage, I didn't talk to Jeff then but he was using an orange Colorsound [fuzz]. We're driving home and our road manager pulls this orange Colorsound out of his jacket. He said 'Well, he had six of them so I just picked it up for you!' I got really pissed off. I said, 'No, we don't do that! That is not us.' But we were still pretty hand to mouth, and back then getting equipment going back and forth across the pond was a big deal. What was I gonna do – ship it to him? I had it for about three weeks and then it got stolen from me. I was actually kind of happy to see it go. So I always felt bad about it. So later on me and Brad [Whitford, Aerosmith guitarist] were some of the first guys to get some Klon Centaur pedals. We each had three or four of them. They're pretty amazing, and still today they're kind of the '59 Les Paul of pedals. I took one of my original ones and after the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame soundcheck I told Jeff the story and said, 'I just want to adjust the karma here, so I want you to have this.' I think he was pretty surprised to get it and I was really happy to give it to him. I've given him a few presents over the years, just to let him know I'm listening.

Rockabilly Beck

I've seen almost every tour he's done. The first one I missed was when he was playing with Stevie Ray Vaughan. I was really bummed about missing that one, but pretty much every tour I've gotten to go back and talk with him for a minute. It was really only in the last five or six years he invited me over to his house. Hollywood Vampires [Joe's side project with Alice Cooper and Johnny Depp] had a song, *Welcome To Bushwackers*, that was almost a rockabilly kind of thing. One of his favourite hobbies is playing rockabilly. He's a huge Gene Vincent fan. Jeff heard that one and he said he would do it, but he wanted to take it home and work on it. When we got it back it was great. I mean – it was Jeff!

All feel and ears

I've heard him play a lot of times, and I think the one moment that is the most impressive to me was when he played *Over The Rainbow* with a slide up by the pickups. You know, where there are no frets, and his intonation was spot on. It's all feel and ears. It's not foot pedals, it's not this amp or that amp. He could have done it on anything. It was stunning. That two and a half minutes, the audience was on the edge of their seat. When he finished he looked up almost surprised, like, 'Holy sh*t, I can't believe I just did that!' Every little trick of nuance that he stumbles on, it's like he files it and it's right there at his beck and call. That's what makes him the genius that he is.

No repeats

One thing that I've learned from Jeff over the years, and I try to get there, is that every time you heard him play live he would do something different. 99% of the other guitar players out there, they're going to throw all the licks in their wheelhouse together. When Jeff finally got his voice with the Strat, he played something different every time.

Who jams with a bird tweeting?

When he does the *Blackbird* thing [from 2000 album *You Had It Coming*], forget it! I mean, who jams with a bird tweeting? And I love [2016 album] *Loud Hailer*, because he's got that funk side to him. Pretty early on reading interviews I heard that he was into The Meters. That's really some of my favourite stuff when he's in that in that mode. He plays some killer stuff on that record.

THE 'IN CROWD'
Jimmy Page and Joe Perry watching Jeff and famous friends at the Classic Rock Awards in 2016.

The slide master

He very seldom if ever does anything that isn't in standard tuning. The most amazing thing about his slide playing is that he finds the notes. Most people use an open tuning. Jeff's influence on me as far as slide playing is that there are no boundaries. You'd swear to God he was tuning his guitar down, but what he's doing is playing in keys that make it when you go down to an E or whatever it sounds like down the road a ways. He's not a capo guy, he's not an open tuning guy. I don't even think he's picked up an acoustic guitar in 40 years but he sure has picked up a Stratocaster!

The artist

Salvador Dali looked at the world with different eyes than most people, and was able to put it out there and try and get people to see what he was seeing. He was always inventing new ways to express himself, and so I think that of all the painters in that world Salvador Dali probably comes the closest to what Jeff does.

The genius

One of the last times I saw him play live we were doing the Classic Rock Awards in Tokyo. [Photographer] Ross Halfin put it together, but I didn't want to go all the way to Japan for one thing. I said, 'Okay, who's gonna be there?' Ross went down the list and I said, 'I cannot miss this!' I remember sitting in the audience during the soundcheck when Jeff came out. I was sitting there with Jimmy Page, just the two of us, like two kids elbowing each other every time Jeff would play something. I don't know why he bothers playing his slide because he can duplicate that with his vibrato arm. He'll test his amp just to make sure it's working and it's like, 'I never heard that before!' That's the thing about Jeff: he's on this journey and always has been, discovering new stuff. That's the genius. That's why there's all of us other guitar players and then there's him. Every time you see him he's doing something different. That's the thing that inspires me the most about Jeff.

"I WAS SITTING WITH JIMMY PAGE, LIKE TWO KIDS ELBOWING EACH OTHER EVERY TIME JEFF WOULD PLAY SOMETHING!"

Insert photo John Bionelli

Words Ellie Rogers **Photo** Kit Wood

"HE MADE THE GUITAR A DIFFERENT INSTRUMENT"

To witness Jeff Beck play live was a near-spiritual experience...

by Joanne Shaw Taylor

Pure inspiration

First things first – I'd say Jeff Beck is probably my favourite guitar player, and the reason for that is that there is just no one else like him. I should be talking in past tense, which I'm still not used to. I really was shocked by his death, as I think everyone was. He was in better shape than me when he was 78!

I met Jeff through Carmen Vandenberg – who I say is like my little sister – and who obviously played with Jeff for a couple of years and was very, very close to him personally. I also opened for him a couple of times. He had quite an impact on me.

It was all around 2010 because it was on the *Emotion & Commotion* tour, which – and this may be an unpopular opinion – is probably my favourite album of his.

I either opened up for him or happened to be on the same bill as him at several festivals from Sydney to Memphis for a whole month. Then, I think the last time I opened up for him was about 2015.

The fondest memory I have is from when we opened up for him in Orange in the South of France, and it was at this massive outdoor amphitheatre. I snuck up the back of the steps because I wanted to watch it from the audience's point of view, and I just remember when he played *Over The Rainbow*. I'm not a religious person, but I think that's about as close as I'll get to something spiritual. It was just astounding.

That was the reason he was my favourite guitar player – it almost wasn't like he was playing guitar, it was a like different instrument altogether.

Complete control

I was actually a little bit late to the Jeff Beck party, which I think is because when I started playing at around 13 I was obsessed with Texas blues. I was a bit of a snob about it, to be quite honest! I didn't have any interest in the Brit guys – whether that was Zeppelin, or Kossoff or Clapton, even.

In my early twenties, my Dad took me to see Jeff at De Montfort Hall in Leicester. I can't remember what tour it was on, but he had videos of all his hot rods behind him and I was like, 'What's this about? Is he obsessed with cars or something?' I didn't know that much at the time, but I think that was the first time I started to take him really seriously and realised it transcended blues, and it was multiple genres. He was completely in control of his instrument.

Unlike a lot of guitar players – because I was never too interested in the technical side of things – Jeff managed to be a technically brilliant guitar player, but still draw you in through melody and a tone that was almost like a violin at times.

We were listening to *Live At Ronnie Scott's* in the studio on the day he passed away, and we were all saying that it doesn't sound like a guitar. I don't know what it sounds like. It's kind of like a violin and it transcends it – almost like he made the guitar a different instrument.

Advocating for female artists

The other reason that Jeff really appealed to me was the fact that he seemed really supportive of female artists. Every time I saw him play, he either had Joss Stone there, or Beth Hart or Rhonda Smith or Tal Wilkenfeld there. He had Anika Nilles as the drummer on this tour he's just been on. It kind of linked me back to Dave Stewart a bit because he always seemed to find his muses in females – whether that's Joss Stone or Annie Lennox or me – and I really liked that about Jeff. He was so supportive of female artists, and obviously really heard his music with a female voice. He worked with Jimmy Hall and Rod Stewart, obviously, but it was nice to see, and it was interesting that he liked to have a female voice to his music as he didn't sing.

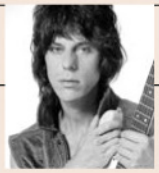
Pushing boundaries

You hear a lot of kids coming up – including myself – who sound a bit like Stevie Ray Vaughan or a bit like Albert Collins or a bit like Eric Johnson, but you never hear anyone sounding like Jeff Beck because you can't do it. Jeff kept pushing boundaries. He was an artist that was going to follow what he wanted to do. He wasn't going to follow the rules. He was going to keep chasing what he thought was the next best thing in how he pushed himself. That was always a big influence on me.

As a professional guitar player, there was something really nice about being able to watch Jeff and not being able to do it. Sometimes I get put off listening to certain artists because I'll think too much about what they're doing and because I'll know what they're doing. It's refreshing to be able to listen to a guitar player and have no idea.

Unfortunately, a lot of us guitar players sit there watching another guitar player and kind of break it down. You couldn't do that with Jeff. You'd just enjoy it and wonder at how he did it.

"HE COULD DRAW YOU IN THROUGH MELODY AND A TONE THAT WAS ALMOST LIKE A VIOLIN"



Words Ellie Rogers

"HE WAS AN AMBASSADOR FOR INSTRUMENTAL GUITAR MUSIC"

The trailblazer who played from the heart, not the head...

by Cory Wong

Feel and emotion

A lot of instrumental guitar music felt very esoteric to a lot of people, and Jeff Beck was one of the first people to be an ambassador for instrumental guitar music in a way that didn't feel so esoteric, but had so much feel, so much emotion and so much depth to it.

He did stuff that was very smart, but it came across in a way that was more from the heart than the head. Now, I feel like I'm somebody who's an ambassador for the instrument itself and an ambassador for instrumental guitar music, and Jeff paved the way with so many of his albums. Obviously, and most famously, there's *Cause We've Ended As Lovers*, which is such a beautiful delivery of melody on the guitar.

The guitar sings

Jeff is one of the people who first figured out how to connect with the general public with instrumental guitar, and so much of it was by making it sound like somebody singing. You put some actual feel, and you put something in there that feels like it's a person speaking, rather than things being played on the guitar. He had an incredible way of connecting on a human level with his instrument, and he was able to transcend the instrument in a lot of ways.

There's a lot of people who do very impressive instrumental guitar work, but it's to showcase the instrument, or to showcase a technique. That's fun, that's cool and that has its purpose, but I feel like Jeff was channelling something that didn't matter whether it was going to be guitar or whether it was going to be saxophone or piano. He had something innately in him that he needed to express, and he was able to communicate. The way that he best communicated was with his guitar and by delivering that emotion through his guitar. That's something that is a gift to the guitar community.

Master of the Stratocaster

I'm a diehard Strat guy. There's so many reasons why, but Jeff Beck was on that list of reasons. When I was a kid, I had a crappy little guitar from a pawn shop, but when I was finally ready to take the guitar seriously, I needed a good guitar – a real guitar – and my Dad said, 'Alright! We're going to get you a Stratocaster!'

He'd decided what kind of guitar I was going to get, and was like, 'Listen! You love the Chili Peppers, you love Stevie Ray Vaughan. Look at Jeff Beck, look at Jimi Hendrix, look at Stevie Ray and Eric Johnson.' He gave me this lineage of the Stratocaster and basically said: Look at all the things this guitar is capable of. I'm glad that was the logic and I studied the masters of the Strat for years.

Jeff Beck approached the Stratocaster and approached the use of the trem bar in a way where it's not just coming down, it's also bringing it up. It's a different feel when you bend a string versus when you hold a string and push the trem in to make it go sharp. That was part of his sound and that was something that was very uniquely his.

The ultimate bandleader

To be a good bandleader, it's important to know what other good bandleaders do, and what things need to be communicated to just the band, versus what things need to be communicated to the band with the audience in consideration. I've studied a lot of my favourite bandleaders and favourite guitar players, and when you look at somebody like Jeff Beck, he had an ability to lead in a way that's probably more subtle than a lot of others, but still communicated just as strongly. If you take a look at James Brown or Prince when they're calling something out, it's much more overt and it's inviting the audience in on it as well.

Jeff had a way where his playing or his phrasing would suggest that it's going somewhere. He'd phrase something just enough that you'd think it's going to go to another thing, but then he'd make a gesture that confirms it. It's not so overt, but if you're listening and you're watching, he's giving his audience and his band just enough to keep them informed.

Lost in music

Sometimes, when somebody will go see a show they think, 'I should just be watching Jeff the whole time', and we naturally have that because they're the star and their name's on the

marquee. But there's a time to disappear in the music. He did that masterfully – oftentimes in a trio setting, which is very hard to do.

I have a 10 or 11 piece band, so it's quite easy for me to disappear in the music because I can lay back and let other people go way up, and there's all this other stuff happening. In a trio setting, it's a lot harder to do. He was able to do that in so many different settings that really showed depth that doesn't always get recognised as being something that's hard to do on guitar. But, it's incredibly hard to do. You have to learn how to step out front and learn to sometimes disappear into the landscape.

A singular voice

I am personally known for a certain thing and I have mastered that thing. That is my voice, but I can also do a lot of the other stuff. I just choose not to. Jeff is a prime example of that, and gave permission to say: 'I've got a voice. I've got a thing that others don't do.'

If we're just talking in terms of guitar technique, and if you were to look at a lot of what he did on paper, it would maybe be more simple than what a lot of other guitar players do. But, he had all that other stuff as well, he just chose not to do it because he had a certain way of playing that made him stand out and made him a singular voice on the instrument.

"HE HAD AN INCREDIBLE WAY OF CONNECTING ON A HUMAN LEVEL"

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photo** Kevin Nixon

"HE WAS IN A CLASS OF ONE"

When Jeff Beck played, no one could touch him...

by Vivian Campbell of Def Leppard

The ideas man

I first saw Jeff when he toured with Stevie Ray Vaughan on the *Guitar Shop* album. I saw their co-headline tour at a sports arena in downtown LA. It was equally inspiring and depressing to witness Jeff Beck play live. You go there thinking you're a guitar player and you leave realising that you're a guitar owner! He was just in a league by himself. He was in a class of one. There was no one who did what Jeff did. It was technical, but there's nothing anyone can play that somebody else can't figure out. You could get yourself a Strat like he played and with enough practice you could play like Jeff Beck, but what was amazing about Beck was always the inspiration. It was the ideas that he had.

The floating bridge

In later years he got into playing that Strat with the floating bridge. The way that he would play with his fingers – to play any sort of guitar music with your fingers is incredibly liberating. You're opening up these avenues that just don't exist to those of us that play with a flat pick. It's not unusual to go to Nashville and see people play with their fingers. In bluegrass or country that's expected, but to use those techniques and expand upon those techniques and in more of a rock format was something that hadn't been done before. His expanding on those techniques involved pinched harmonics with his thumb, just getting all sorts of tonal delicacy that you don't get using a pick, all whilst controlling the volume with his pinky, swelling and giving the guitar that majestic effect.

The master of reverb

Jeff obviously grew up in the era before we had all these fancy guitar effects that we have nowadays. He was a master exponent of reverb, which I think is overlooked. Reverb was it basically, and tape delay. He had a very cultivated ear for the use of reverb. It kind of went over my head the first time I would listen to some of his stuff, and then I go back and think, 'Oh, it sits so well there because it's a very clever use of reverb.'

The Jeff Beck experience

It all mostly comes down to: 'How the f*ck did he think of that sh*t?' All other guitar players, we have our patterns we'd always go back to, your physical patterns to play your licks. Jeff did that on occasion but more often than not he was exploring. He seemed to be just pushing boundaries and exploring ways to express himself beyond the norm. That was always the appeal to me, and then to witness it live. To witness any music live is a much more immersive experience and that's really what it's all about. To go to a Jeff Beck show and to surround your body with the majesty of his music was just a great uplifting experience, but then you go home when you look at your guitars and it's like somebody let all the air out of a balloon. I didn't know if I wanted to play them or sell them!

Big boots to fill

I didn't set out to try an emulate Jeff on my cover of *Led Boots* [from the tribute album *Jeffology*, 1995]. That's just how I was playing at that time. I was using the Tom Anderson Strats, so I also had a floating bridge, albeit a Floyd. That wasn't so terribly long after the *Guitar Shop* album, which was a big album for me. I did like being able to have the floating bridge and shimmer chords, to get that more lyrical vibrato on single notes, and to do interesting things when you pull up on the bridge. I guess obviously I've been influenced by Beck to an extent and I think that was probably the zenith of it around that time. I'm not conscious of having any particular licks in the song where I'm like, 'Oh, this is a real Beckism." It naturally filtered into how I was playing at the time.

The guitarist's guitarist

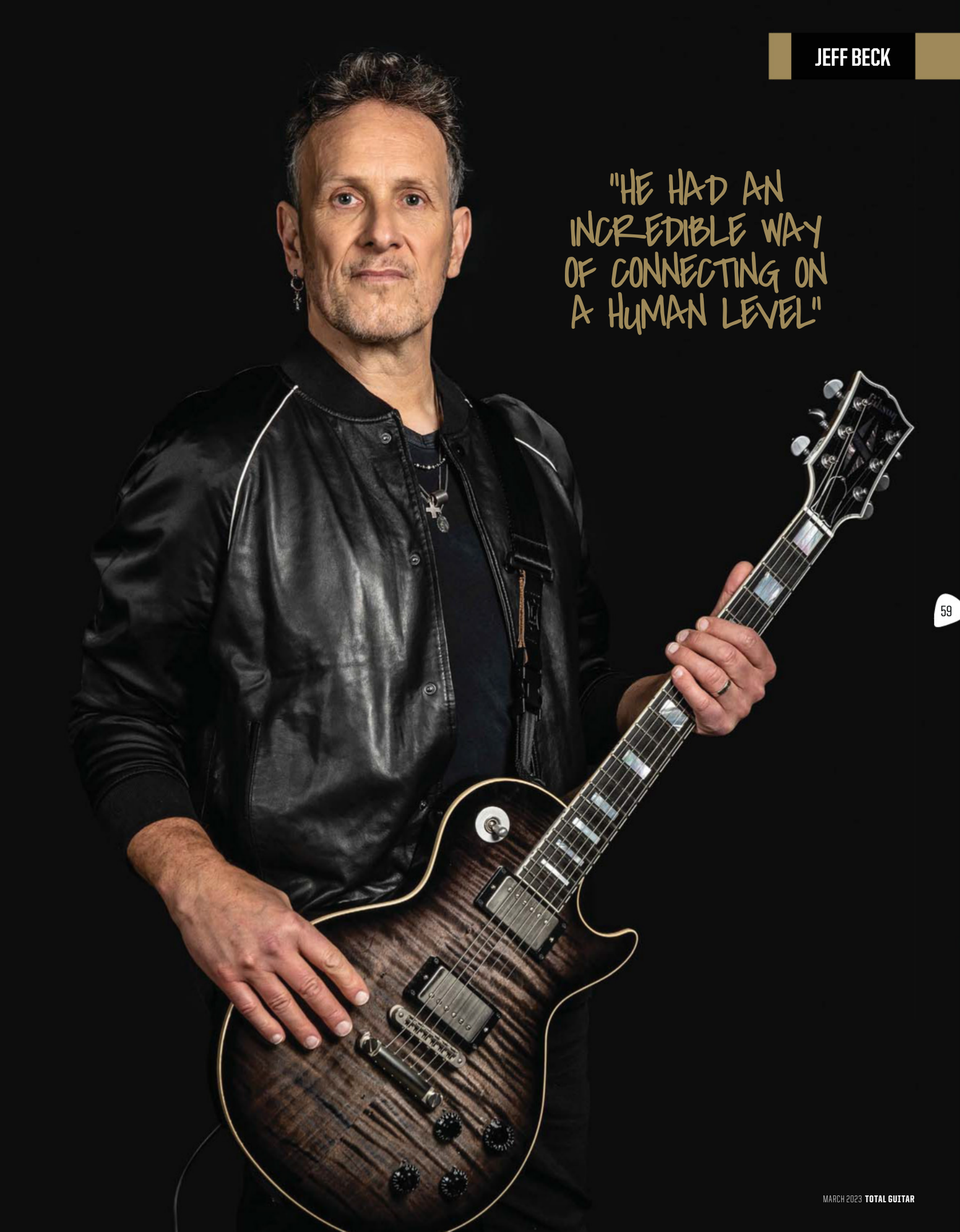
I was fortunate to see him play live a couple of times. It was akin to a religious experience. It was at the Greek Theater the last time I saw him play. You look around the room and there's guitar players everywhere like [Etta James/Paul McCartney guitarist] Brian Ray, Steve Lukather, Mike Landau and all these LA session players. We all went to bow at the altar of Jeff Beck because we all felt the same way.

Master of nuance

When I was in Sweet Savage, so I was probably 17 or 18 at this time, the other guitarist Trevor Fleming said, 'Have you ever heard this guy Jeff Beck?' He gave me a cassette of *Blow By Blow*. I listened to that for several days and I remember copying a lick from it. That's still part of my repertoire. To be honest it wasn't life-changing for me to hear that record. It wasn't until later years when I realised just how head and shoulders above everyone else he was. It was in the later years with the Stratocaster and the floating bridge, that's when he really became this master of nuance.

The player

It's inspirational that at his stage in his life and his career he would still be wanting to push that envelope and wanting to get there. I don't get the impression that he thought a lot about wanting to move the goal posts on how the instrument was played. He just did it. It seems almost godlike that he had this connection to inspiration when he was playing, and he had the tools in his hands to express it. But I never got the impression that Jeff thought much about guitar playing. I think he just played.


"HE HAD AN INCREDIBLE WAY OF CONNECTING ON A HUMAN LEVEL"

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photos** Kevin Nixon

BECK IS AN ARCHETYPE, LIKE HENDRIX IS AN ARCHETYPE

The many faces of Jeff Beck...

by Phil Collen of Def Leppard

The guitar hero

Jeff Beck has always been one of my idols because he's unique. No one sounds like him, no one plays like him and you've got to respect that more than anything else. Everyone else you ever play with, there's always a tip of the hat to the archetype they learned from. Beck *is* an archetype, like Jimi Hendrix is an archetype. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him. No one was able to get anywhere close to that.

All your idols, you think they're gonna last forever. When Bowie went, when Prince went, I'm like, 'What do you mean they're not here?' This was like that. When my dad died he was 81 and he had a good 15 years left in him. He was just getting going. Jeff Beck was like that. There was so much life in him, in his playing and in him personally.

Jamming with Jeff

I was fortunate enough to play with him and hang out with him in at the Classic Rock Awards in 2016, and he was like a young guy, with all this wealth of experience and uniqueness. We were actually honouring Jimmy Page. Jeff's amp blew up and his pedalboard didn't work, so they just brought in another Marshall, and he sounded exactly the same. He didn't even flinch. I've seen some guitar players throw their guitars or get really flustered. Jeff was like, 'Yeah? Bring it on!' To me that was just great.

More jamming with Jeff

He was doing a bunch of songs. Robert DeLeo [of Stone Temple Pilots] was playing bass. He goes, 'Phil, he wants to do *Superstition*, do you want to sing it?' I'm like, 'Absolutely!' So I sang and played guitar and then Jeff goes, 'Well, you've got to stay up and do *Beck's Bolero*.' I said, 'But I only know the lead part!' He goes, 'Just come in on the heavy part.' When you're having this conversation on stage, you go, 'F*ck, it's Jeff Beck!' Ray Luzier [Korn] was on drums. Dean DeLeo [also of Stone Temple Pilots] was playing guitar as well, and he just shouted the chords out for me and we got around it. Robert DeLeo goes, 'Jeff, please just play a bit of *Freeway Jam*!" Jeff said, 'What?!' This is real Jeff Beck geekdom – there's a live album with Jan Hammer and Jeff where they're jamming, making car noises. I went into making car noises, and Jeff just went into the *Freeway Jam*. It was so cool actually hearing that live with the guy playing it, an incredible thing to be part of.

Flying solo

I've been listening to Beck since the 60s. I'm from London and he was always floating around. First it was The Yardbirds, then later on he went off on a tangent like no one else. I love all the fusion stuff with Stanley Clarke, all of his solo albums, especially *Blow By Blow* and *There & Back*, which is just amazing. I always thought that the Jeff Beck Group with Rod Stewart on vocals could have been a huge band. They were supposed to play Woodstock, but Jeff had to fly home, so they never got to do it. Then Jeff launched a solo career. It was all instrumental, which was way better. It highlighted his guitar playing. And then we got Rod Stewart in the Faces, so everyone gained from them not doing Woodstock, even though if they'd done it they could've been as big as Led Zeppelin.

That vibrato

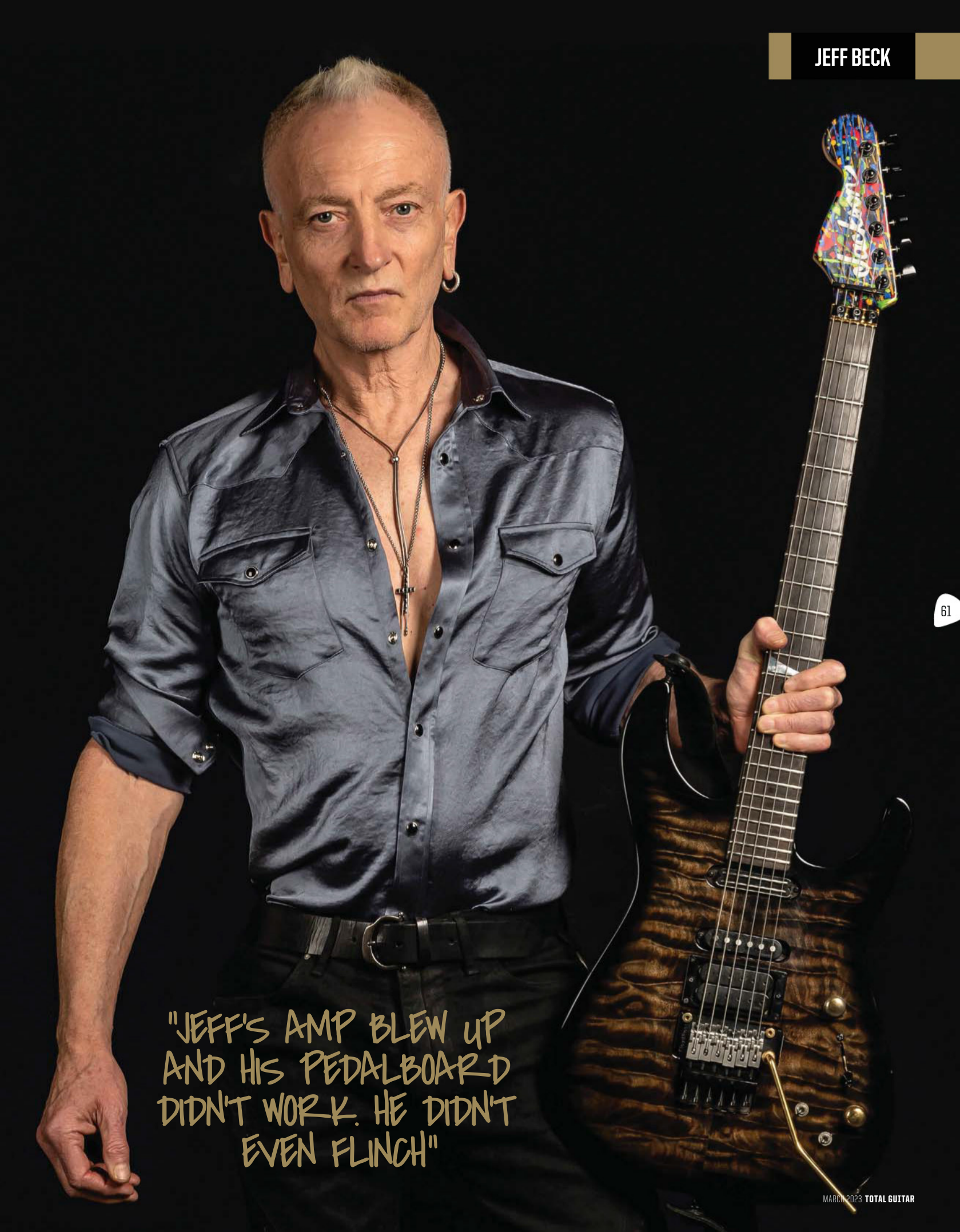
Blow By Blow was the first time he really shone. The songs were beautiful, the playing was unlike anything I'd ever heard. It was just gorgeous. You can tell a guitar player from their vibrato, and no one has successfully copied Jeff Beck's vibrato. That album to me really kicked it off. Because I'm from London, I got to see everyone: Deep Purple, Bowie with Mick Ronson, Zeppelin, Rory Gallagher, but *Blow By Blow* stood out.

The Strat *and* the Les Paul

I got my first Les Paul in 1976. I saw Jeff with Beck, Bogert & Appice at the Rainbow Theatre. He was playing a Les Paul there but he would switch to a Strat sometimes. It's like, why not? I got a Strat and I would switch between them, and then I ended up playing the Jackson PC-1 which is like the ultimate hybrid.

Bend it like Beck

When we did the G3 tour, my guitar tech, John Zucker, goes up to Joe Satriani and asks, 'How you can do this double stop country bend [with a Floyd Rose] and it doesn't go out of tune?' Joe said, 'That's palming.' Say you've got your little finger on the E string and you bend the B string, you push down on the bridge so it doesn't go out of tune. I think that came from Jeff Beck because he's been doing that for years.



"JEFF'S AMP BLEW UP AND HIS PEDALBOARD DIDN'T WORK. HE DIDN'T EVEN FLINCH"

The tribute

When I recorded *Cause We've Ended As Lovers* [for the 1995 tribute album *Jeffology*], I knew it in my head. I knew the vibrato, the bends, and all of that stuff, so when I had to apply it, it became easier. I've always only worked out little parts of songs, just a lick or a verse, but I knew how it was supposed to feel. If you want to do a really killer drum fill or a guitar fill, it should only last for a bar or you're taking away from the thing you're trying to convey. So for the most part it's the same as what Jeff was playing but occasionally I just throw a little bit of me in there, but not long enough for it to detract from what the song's supposed to be.

Jeff Leppard!

I play Beck licks all the time in Def Leppard. I actually do some of the vibrato things and whammy bar things. I was listening to Jeff's version of *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* the other day and I'm going, 'Oh, sh*t!' There's something I do constantly in there, and that's where it comes from. I constantly play them. I'm really a fusion fan. I love Stanley Clarke on his own and Stanley with Jeff Beck. There's a great track called *Hello Jeff* from a Stanley Clarke album and I'm constantly playing like that.

A different beat

When Beck collaborated with [EDM producers] Apollo 440 I totally applauded that. I think that the more tools you have to experiment with, the better you can express yourself. I do it all the time. I'm always using different beats and even some music trends that I'm not a fan of, I still kind of incorporate. There's great stuff all the all the way around. So when Jeff Beck did that, it's absolutely what you're supposed to do.

Jeff and Jagger

When we were recording *Hysteria* in Holland, Mick Jagger was doing his second solo album with Simon Phillips on drums and Jeff Beck on guitar. You can't hear f*ck all through a studio door but I'm still trying to listen because I know they're in there! Then the door opens and it's Jagger. He goes, 'Hey man, come on in! So me and [Leppard drummer] Rick Allen went in. We're sitting in the control room with Mick Jagger doing a live vocal, and there's Jeff Beck and Simon Phillips playing live with Doug Wimbish on bass. It was completely surreal.

The pursuit of happiness

Some people just express themselves in a beautiful way. That's why Beck was Beck. I think the integrity of your actions makes you happy. He could have been in the Stones, but he had his own stuff to say. Some artists want to be famous above everything else. That's not the Beck way. He kept his integrity and that's really rare – I think he was completely happy with choosing that.

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JEFF BECK GUITAR MASTER

Inside the style of the influential guitar icon

In a career spanning nearly 60 years, Jeff Beck can truthfully be said to have pushed the boundaries of contemporary electric guitar playing consistently and beyond the expectation of his fans. Often cited as the guitar hero's guitar hero, he would wow audiences and fellow musicians alike with his unique playing style, which evolved so much through the years. We could fill the mag many times over with lessons on Jeff's style, so what follows is just a taster of some of his key techniques, starting with a pictorial demonstration of his approaches to playing fingerstyle. Our tab lessons begin with a look at Jeff's musical style in the Yardbirds, before taking in some of his 70s fusion era and culminating in his whammy bar- and volume swell-infused fingerstyle lead lines. Try out the tab examples and then jam over the backing mixes we've provided.

JEFF'S PICK HAND TECHNIQUE

It all starts here! Get to grips with Jeff's unusual fingerstyle lead technique and you'll soon be playing his signature fluid, expressive lead lines

1 From his efficient movements you'd be hard pressed to tell just how much is going on when it comes to Jeff's picking.

2 Jeff generally fingerpicks using just his thumb and first finger. This gives the best economy of movement, and...

3 ...picking with his thumb and first finger, Jeff can operate the whammy bar with his remaining fingers.

4 Jeff's efficient technique leaves him with fingers free to give the volume knob a spin for a wailing 'violining' sound.

5 With just a short move, Jeff will press the bridge plate down for 'upward' bends, gargles and vibrato.

1 THUMB-FRETTED BASS NOTES

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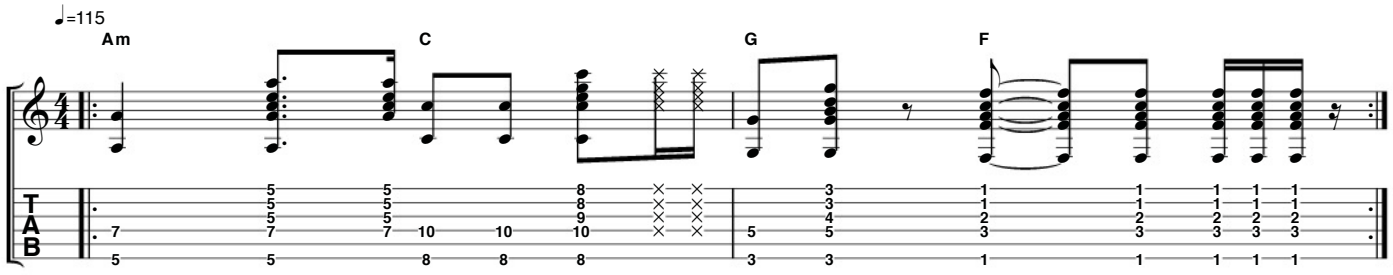

Jeff often hooks the thumb of his fret hand over the top of the neck to fret sixth-string bass notes. These type of barre chord fingerings sound great, partly because there's often more clarity in the bass frequencies thanks to the fifth string staying idle. Check out Jeff's playing on *For Your Love* by the Yardbirds for an example.

2 YARDBIRDS-ERA FAST TRILLS

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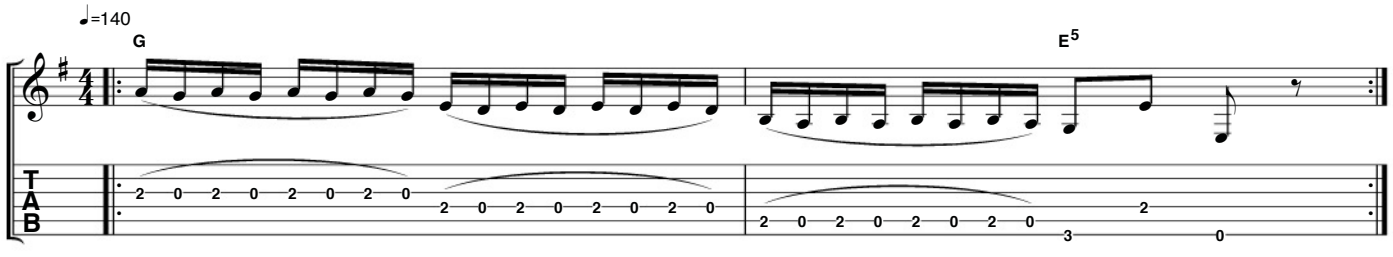

Another technique Jeff perfected during his days with the Yardbirds – for example, in *Jeff's Boogie* – is the fast trill. This works particularly well on an open string, but can be played anywhere on the fretboard. The main thing is to develop is a clean hammer-on and pull-off technique without scuffing any of the idle strings.

3 SLIDE TECHNIQUE

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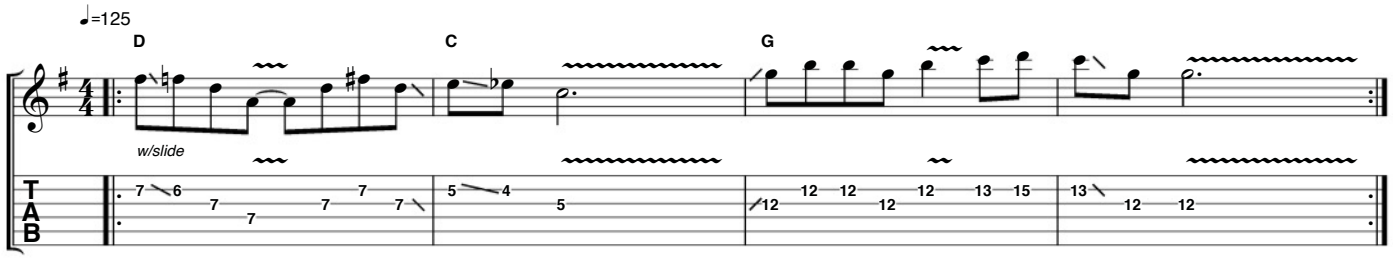

Jeff is no stranger to the bottleneck slide and taking inspiration from *Rice Pudding* on *Beck-ola*, our example uses some classic, blues-style phrasing. The picking hand fingers provide good facility and tone that's perfect for slide guitar playing.

4 FAUX SLIDE STYLE

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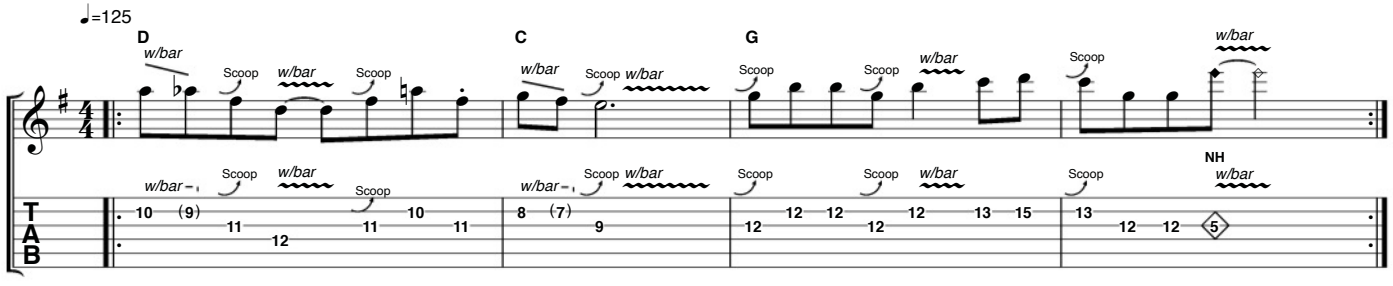

This is a version of the previous lick but played using the whammy bar to execute the pitch shifts instead of with a slide. It's something Beck does extensively, but we're taking inspiration from 2010's *Never Alone*. The natural harmonics work particularly well with the whammy bar as the notes tend to sustain better than fretted notes.

5 FUZZ TONE RIFFS

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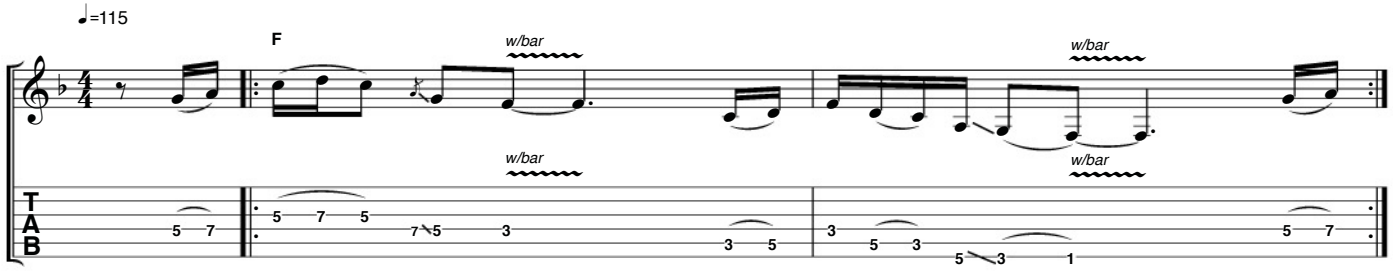

Chaotic sounding fuzz tone riffs are at the heart of Jeff's middle period albums. Tracks such as *Led Boots* and *Hammerhead* typify this. For this one, select a bridge pickup and really dig in with the fingers of your picking hand.

6 THUMB DOWNPICKING

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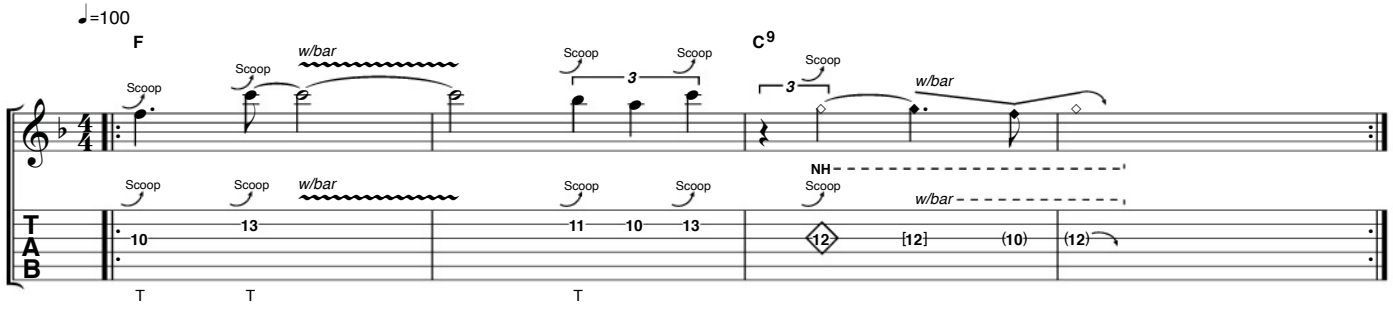

From the 80s Jeff's style is predominantly fingerstyle, often with the surprisingly simple approach of using just the thumb to pick with. Fingers one, two and three are then free to manipulate the whammy bar and the pinky can adjust the volume and tone controls. Most of the examples in our lesson use a thumb downpicking technique.

7 VOLUME KNOB SWELLS

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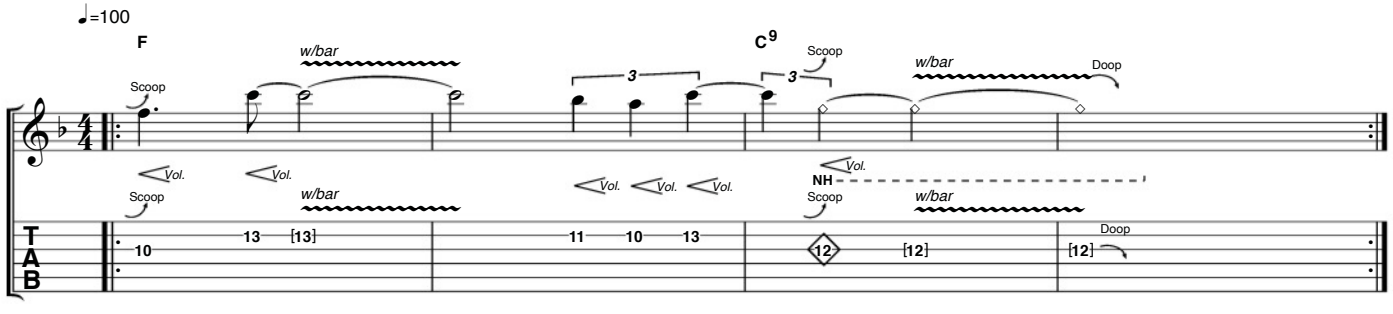

Swelling the volume knob helps to blur the characteristic attack of guitar strings. The result is a softer, more keyboard-like delivery and the technique is particularly effective when combined with delay and effects. It's another technique found extensively in Jeff's live performances, particularly from the 80s onwards.

8 WHAMMY BAR SCOOPS

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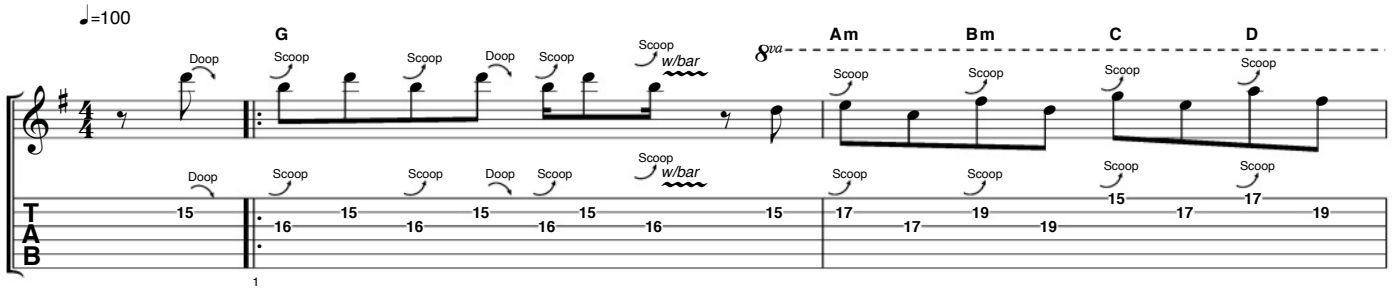

8 WHAMMY BAR SCOOPS (cont'd)

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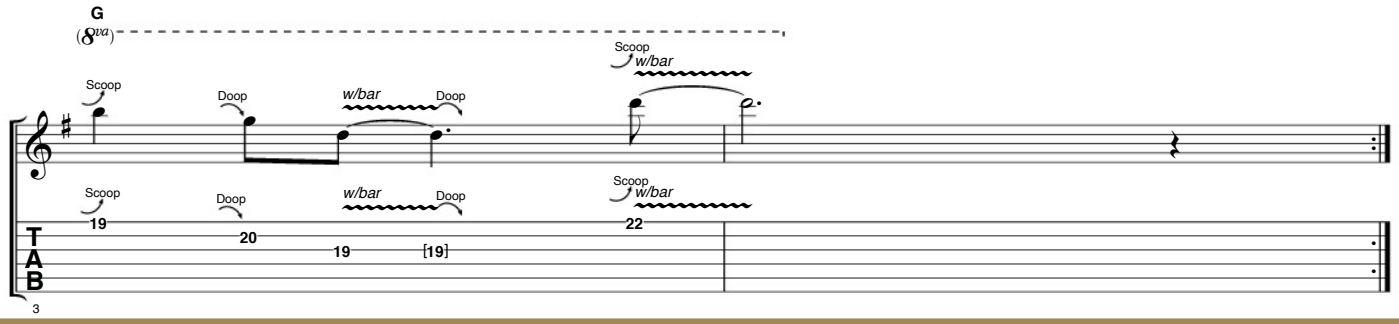

Hopefully you're getting the idea by now that a huge part of Jeff's genius lies in how he adds texture and colour to almost every note played. Here, we're looking at his whammy bar scoop technique – the idea being to depress the bar just before picking the string, then gradually raise into the note. Pure Beck!

9 NATURAL HARMONIC RUNS

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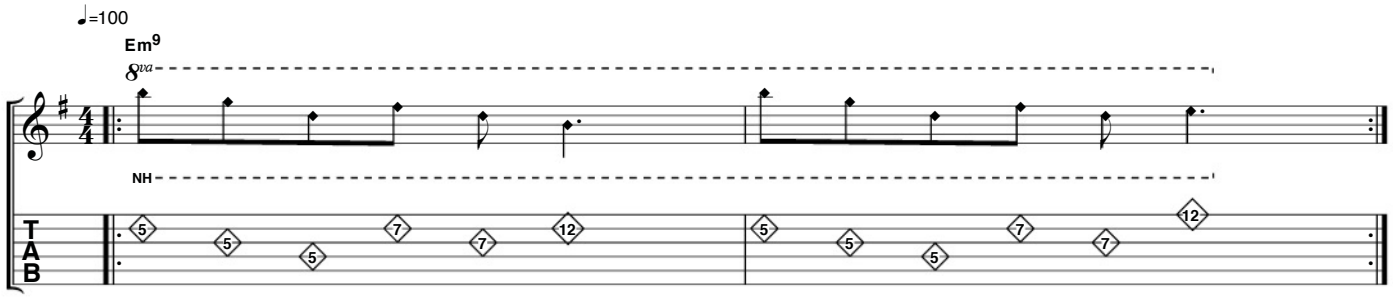

Jeff would often use harmonics for a fresh texture in melodic lines. The challenge lies in mapping out and eventually memorising where the harmonic notes appear on the fretboard. Here we're using the most commonplace 5th, 7th and 12th position harmonics. Simply touch the string over the fret (instead of pressing down) as you pick.

10 WHAMMY BAR MELODIES

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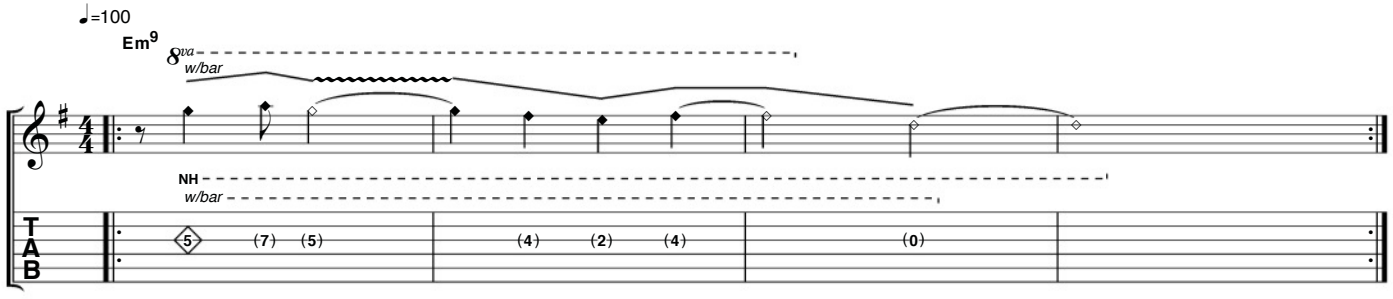

No lesson on Beck's style is complete without a look at whammy bar melodies – and 1989's *Where Were You* stands as a study piece in the technique. One key ingredient is sustain, so this idea works best with resonant open-string notes and harmonics, with the all-important drive tone also helping to keep those notes ringing.

11 BRIDGE STRIKES

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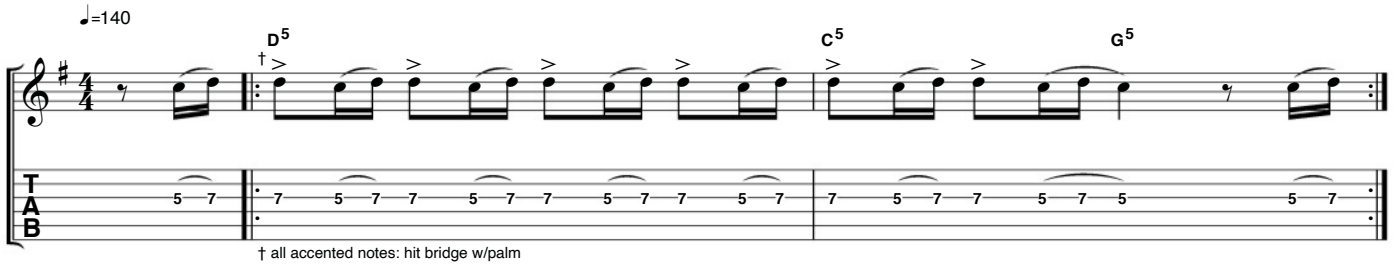

Floating tremolos allow the strings to go both flat and sharp – and Jeff utilises this facility to tap out rhythms on sustained notes and chords. We've notated this with an accent sign over the relevant notes. We're striking the bridge for an upward pitch shift, but down-pitch hits work too. Just strike the whammy bar in its 'home' position.

12 WHAMMY BAR GARGLES

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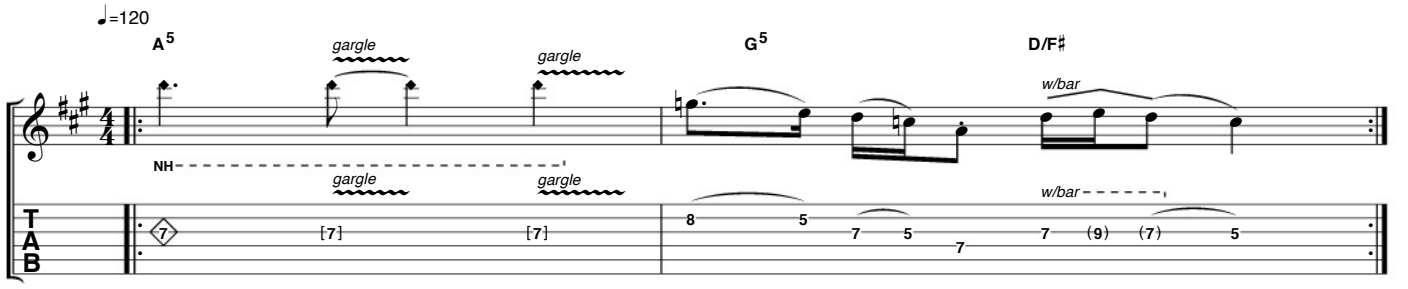
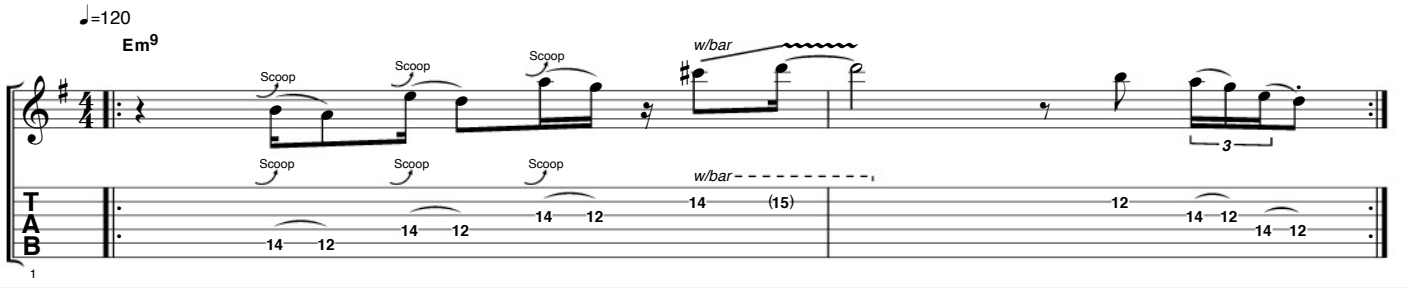


Yet more whammy bar goodness here in a technique that can be heard in some of the frenetic moments of the track *Guitar Shop*. Simply raise the bar (or dip it!) then let your finger slip off the end. The sudden release of tension will cause the block to vibrate and the rather excellent whammy gargle is born.

13 USING PULL-OFFS

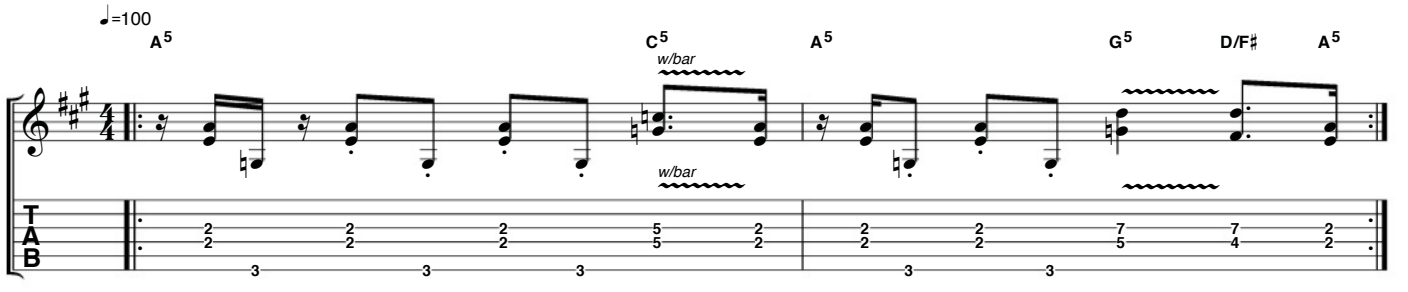
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



This example demonstrates a simple pentatonic pattern that is made possible with the use of pull-offs. First scoop the whammy bar into the 14th fret and as the note sounds pull off to the 12th. The same technique can be repeated through the pentatonic scale which conveniently has two notes per string.

14 BOOGIE RIFFS

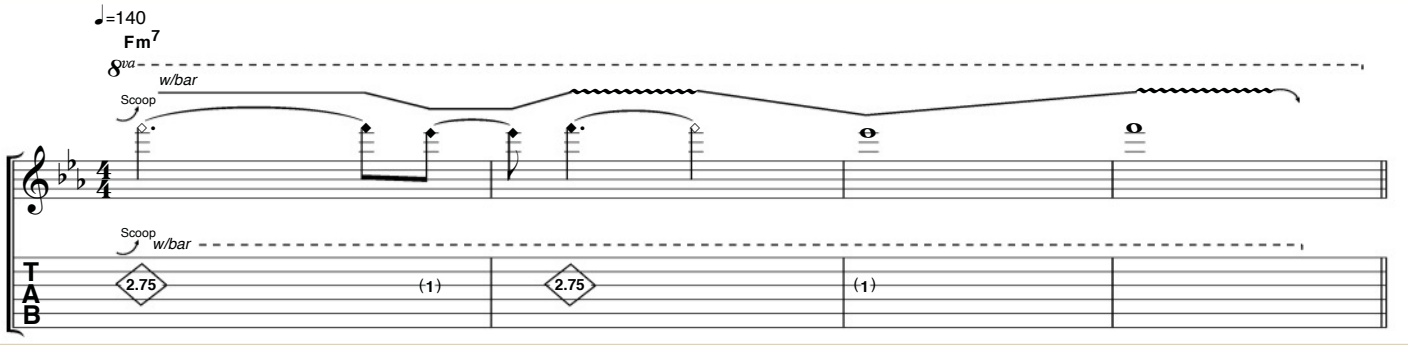
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Jeffs fingerstyle technique provides great facility for this alternative take on the classic boogie riff. The crunch tone is created by boosting the middle frequencies, selecting a bridge pickup and turning the guitar's tone pot right down. Jeff is also fond of leaving the wah wah pedal on with the treadle in the 'sweet spot' to act as a filter.

15 SUPER-HIGH HARMONICS

BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Another Jeff Beck trademark is the use of high-pitched harmonics, which can be articulated with a variety of techniques. For our example we're using a slightly hard to find natural harmonic on the third string in between the 2nd and 3rd frets. It may take a little experimenting, but eventually you should find a super-high F harmonic note. A bridge pickup and lots of sustain will help, and use the whammy bar to scoop in and out of the various notes if required.

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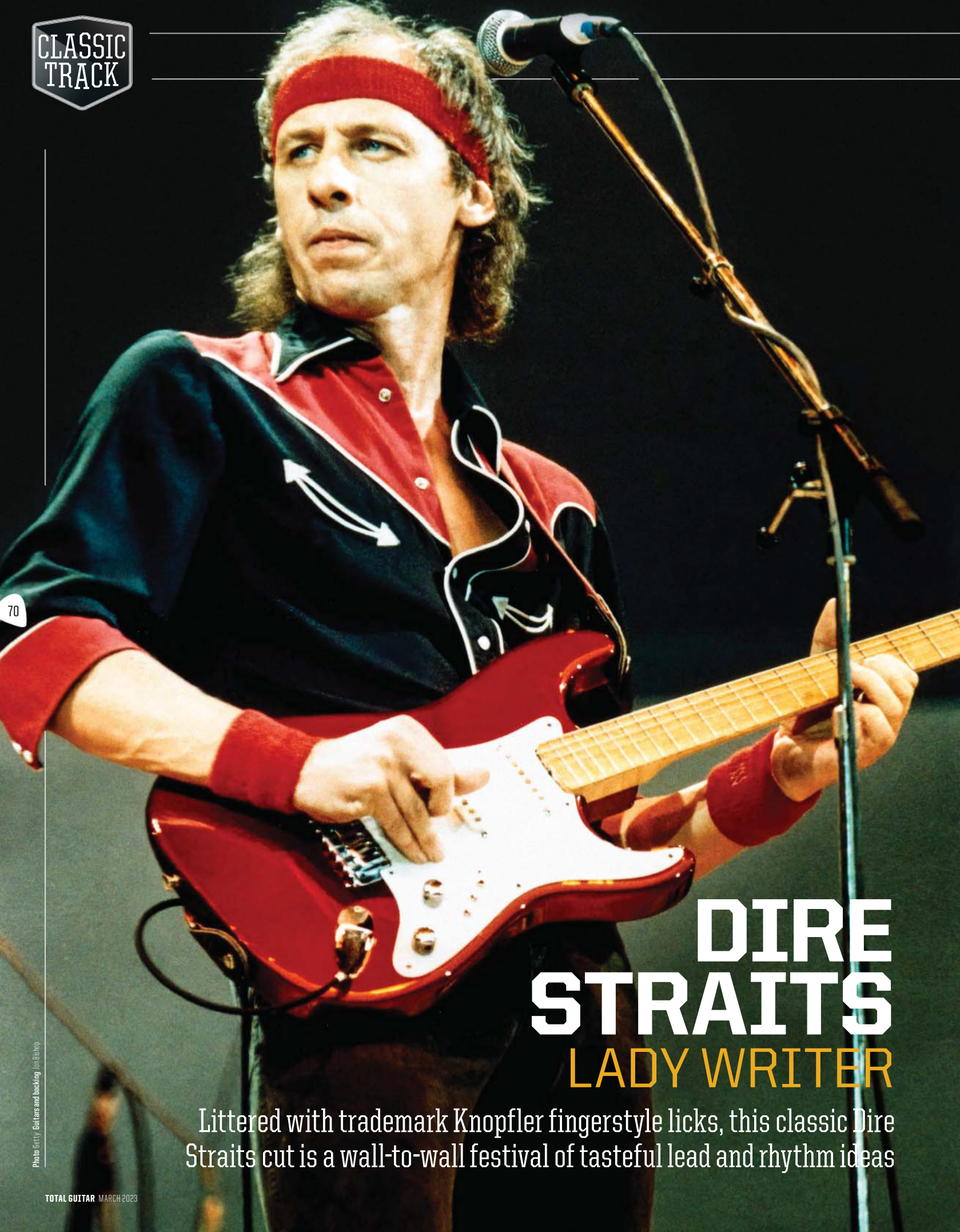


DIRE STRAITS
LADY WRITER

Littered with trademark Knopfler fingerstyle licks, this classic Dire Straits cut is a wall-to-wall festival of tasteful lead and rhythm ideas

Photo Getty Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

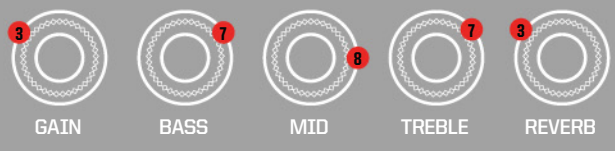
SOUND ADVICE

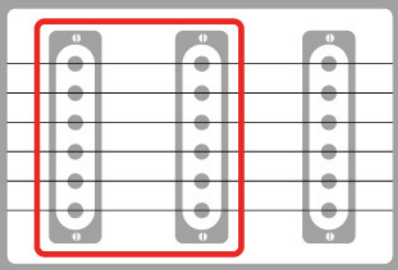
Everything you need to know before playing *Lady Writer*

The phrase 'tone is all in the fingers' is particularly relevant to this month's track. Guitar legend and Dire Straits frontman Mark Knopfler employs his trademark fingerstyle technique for all his rhythm and lead ideas here in the band's classic track, *Lady Writer*. You could use a pick for much of the track if you wanted to, but we'd say the only way to reproduce Knopfler's *feel*, particularly in the rapid-fire outro solo, is to ape the great man's technique – and the opening two bars of that outro are a great study piece. We've added picking directions under the tab at this point. Take care to note how the thumb is employed: sometimes only on the beat, but sometimes on the offbeat, too, when the phrasing has an 'alternating' feel.

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE/CLEAN



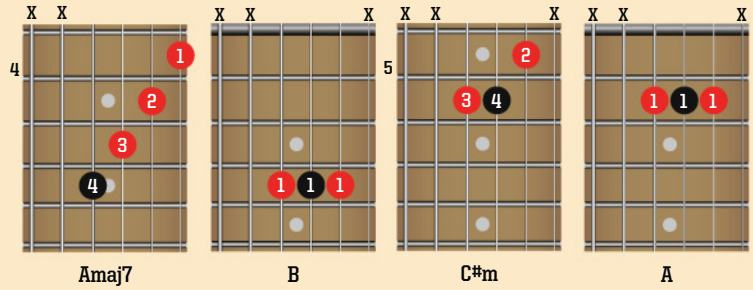


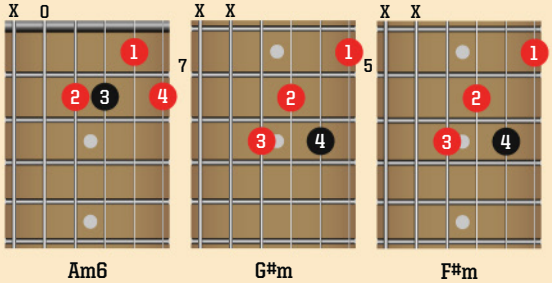
Select the bridge/middle pickup position on a Fender Strat for authentic Knopfler tones.

Mark used his red 1961 Strat with the pickup selector in the 'bridge and middle' position. He used little in the way of effects, so a sparkling clean tone with the subtlest hint of break-up with a dash of spring reverb should be all you need. If your tone is still a little bit 'spiky', try using a compressor to smooth things out and improve your sustain.

CHORDS

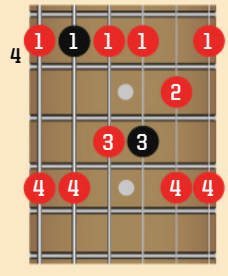
Chordally, this is a relatively simple track, following a repeating A–B–C#m–B progression in the verses, with a G#m ending each one on the final time. E and Am6 are confined to David Knopfler's rhythm guitar, with Mark playing lead over each occurrence.



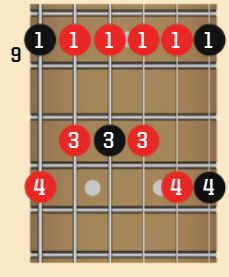


SCALES

The lead licks and solo are mostly constructed with these two shapes of the C# minor pentatonic scale. The scale includes the notes C#, E, F#, G# and B, but note that Mark sometimes adds D# and A notes, completing the C# natural minor scale in the process. Still, it's helpful to think of the simpler pentatonic scale as a 'home base' when improvising, then branching out to these target tones for extra flavour.



C# minor pentatonic scale (shape 4)



C# minor pentatonic scale (shape 1)

DIRE STRAITS
LADY WRITER

FULL TAB

LADY WRITER
Words and Music by Mark Knopfler
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DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Intro

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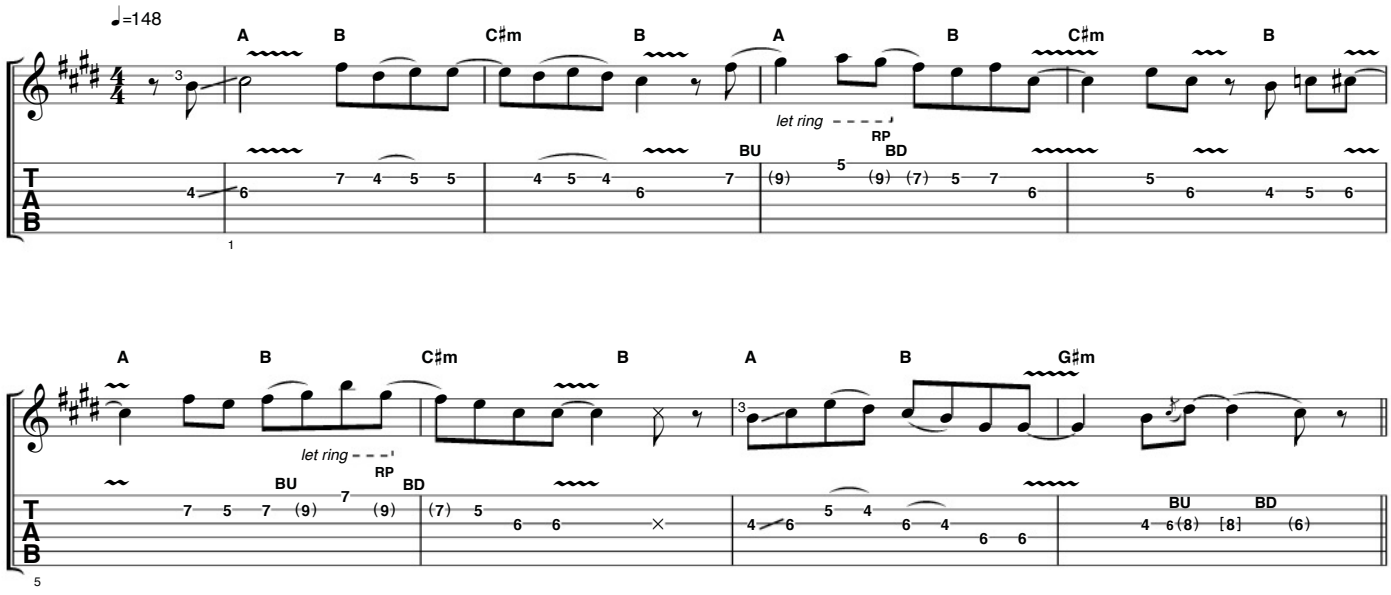
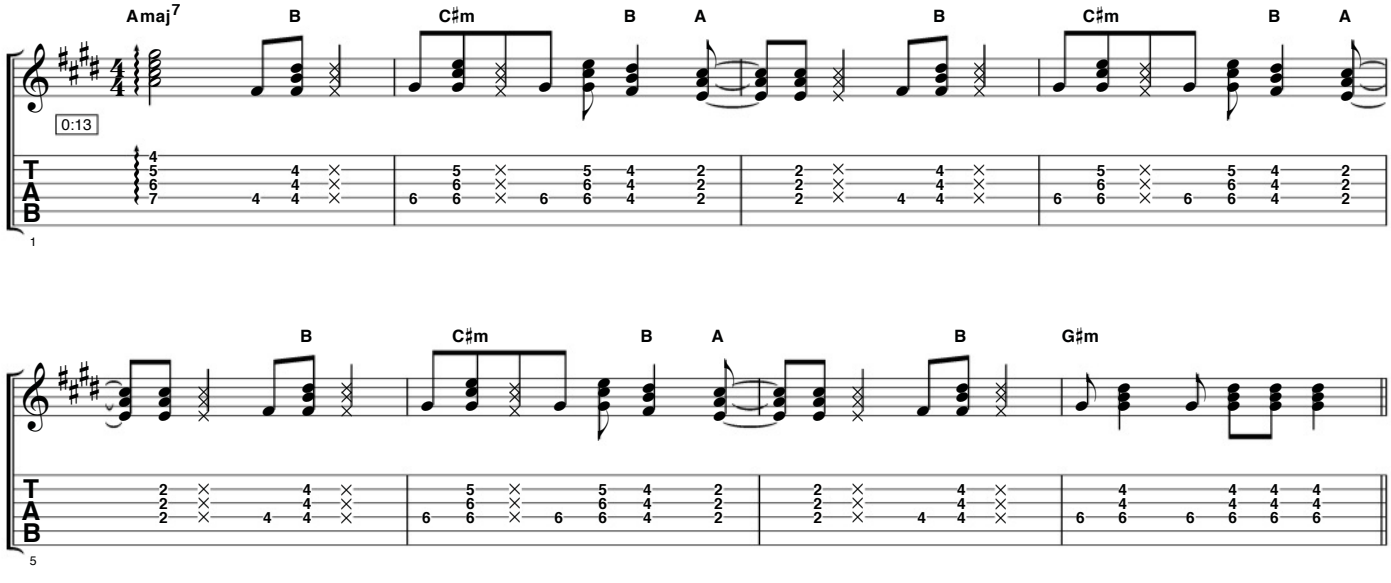


This opening solo sets the scene for the song with a catchy melody line that's reprised in the main guitar solo. Watch out for the 'oblique' pedal steel-type string bends in bars 3 and 5 where you'll need good, accurate intonation as you move the strings.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 1

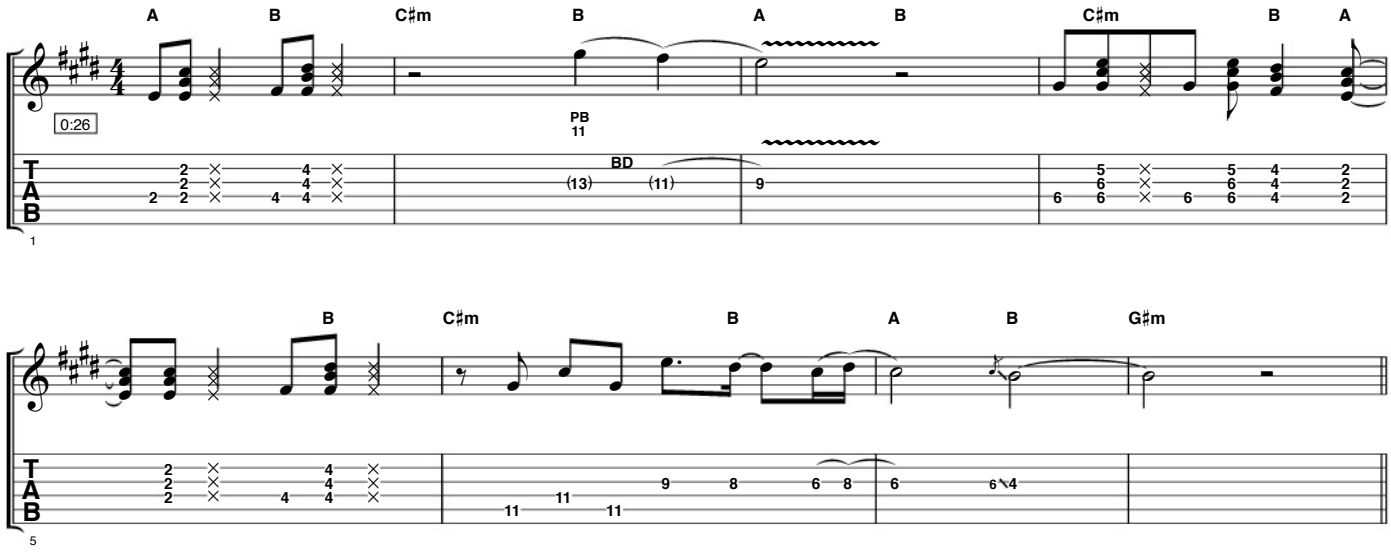
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



This first verse is a transcription of the sparse rhythm part that Mark plays throughout the track. These are partial chords, with only three strings apiece, but see if you can identify the larger barre chords they're based on. Mark took a similar approach in the rhythm parts to *Sultans Of Swing*.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 2

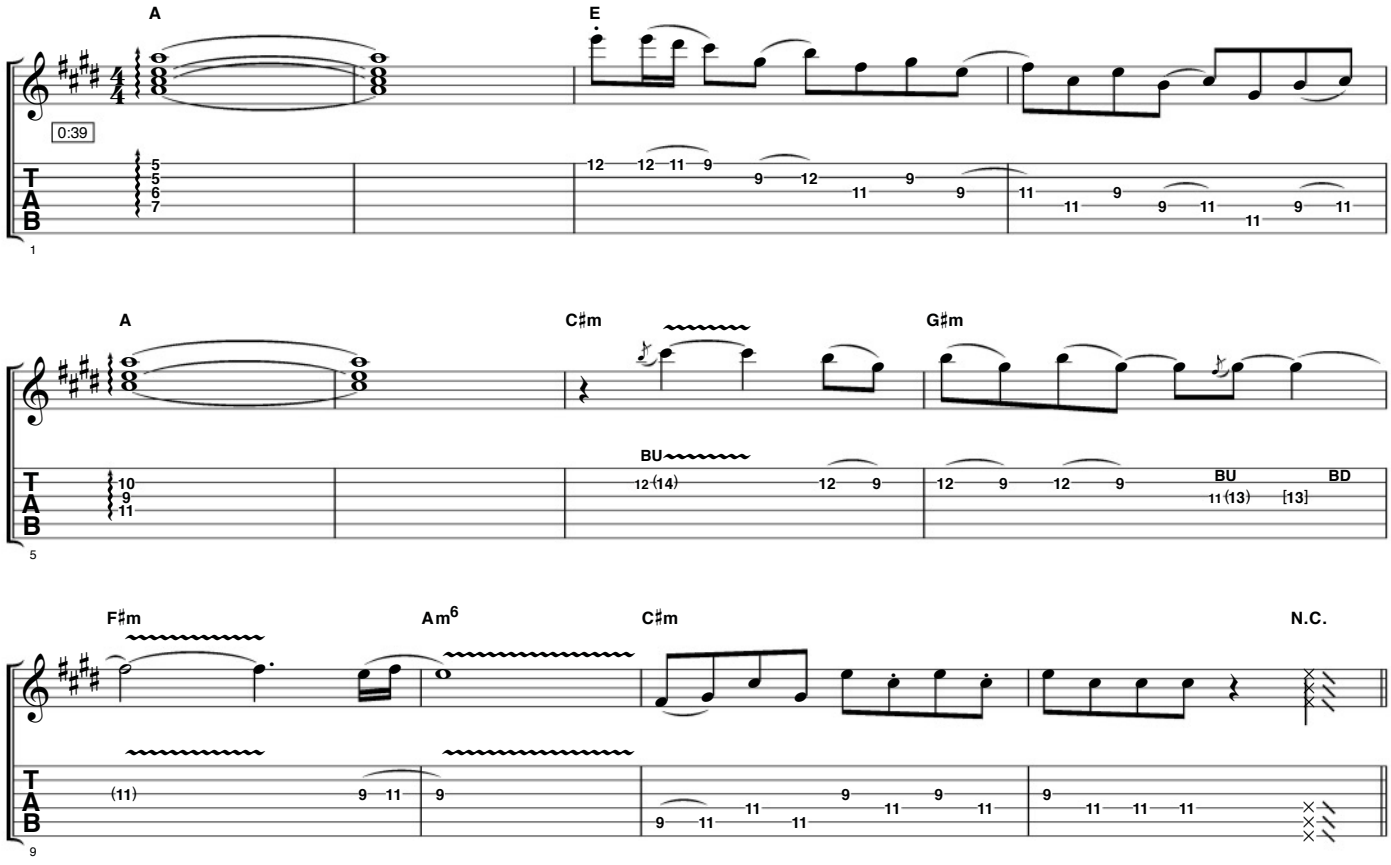
BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



Building on the first verse, this section features question and answer style lead lines played in response to the vocal melodies. You'll need to think 'rhythm' and 'lead' here as you swap between chords and scale-based single-note lines.

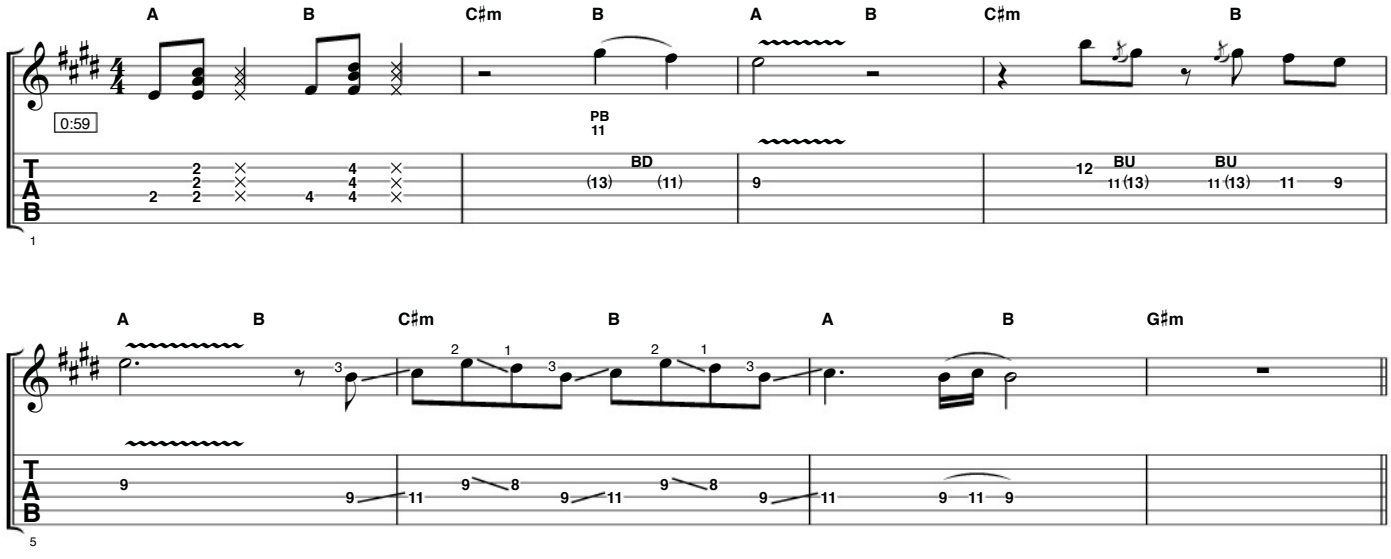
DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Chorus 1

BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO



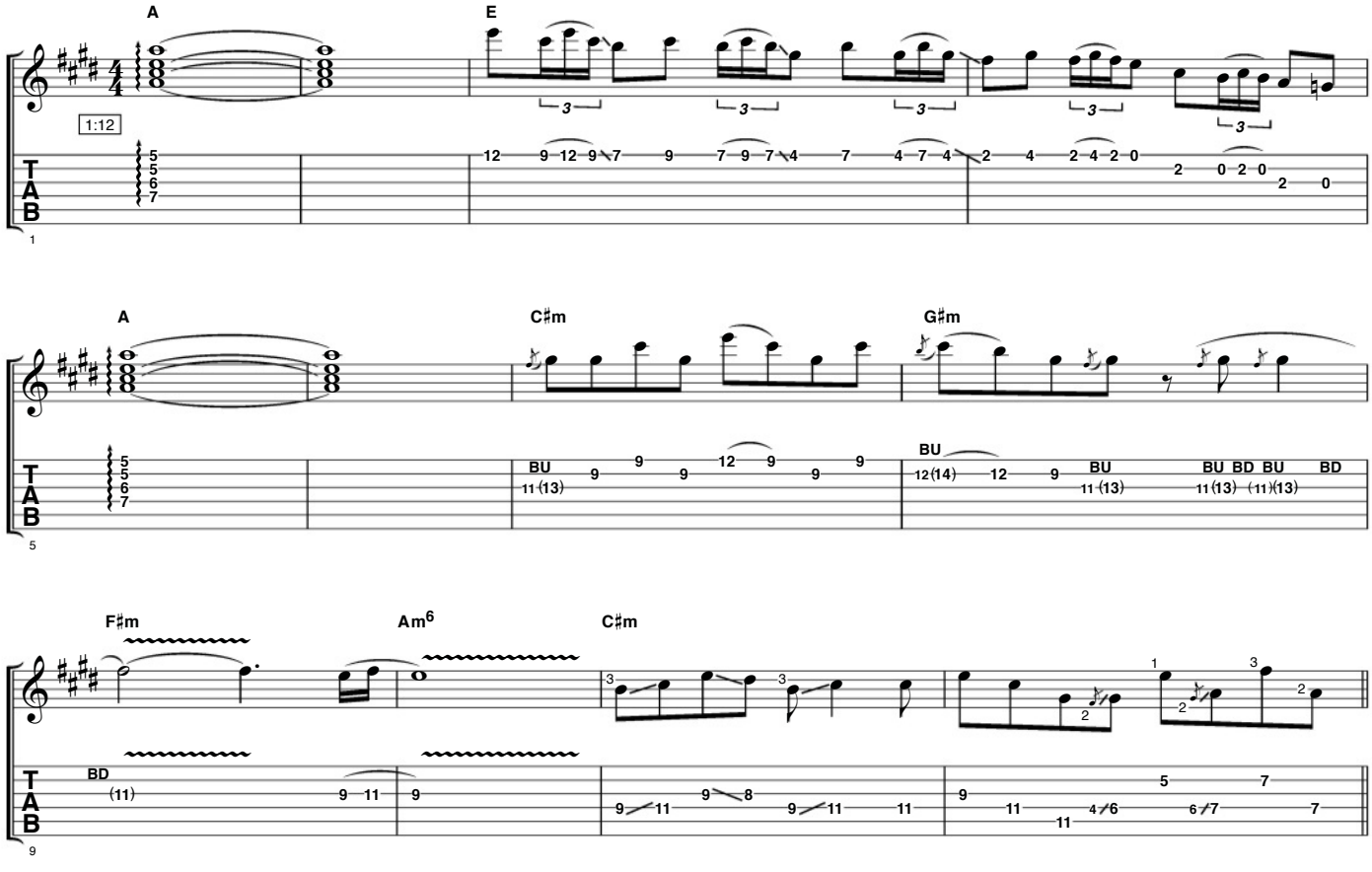
E is the relative major of C♯ minor. So what? Well, E major (E F♯ G♯ A B C♯ D♯) and C♯ minor (C♯ D♯ E F♯ G♯ A B) have the same notes – they just start on a different root. Here in the chorus Mark moves the chord progression to a bright E major tonality with E and A chords, before rounding off back in moody minor territory. It's fine songwriting!

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 3 **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



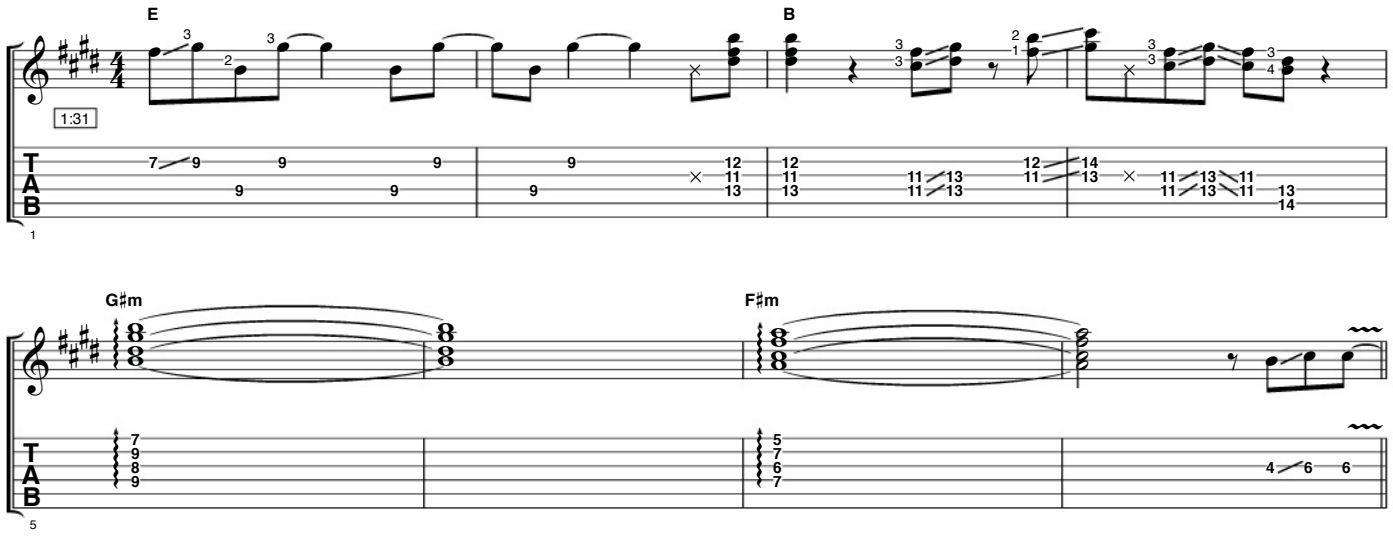
Mark is really in flow by now, with more lead licks supporting and weaving around the vocal lines. Notice the fluidity of the lick in bars 6 and 7, where Mark uses finger slides for a really smooth sound.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Chorus 2 **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



The lick in bars 3 and 4 is played on one string. Mark may have done this for reasons of economy (i.e., it's easiest to play it this way), but it's just as likely he preferred the sound. Take note of where hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides are used – it's the key to unlocking this particular lick.

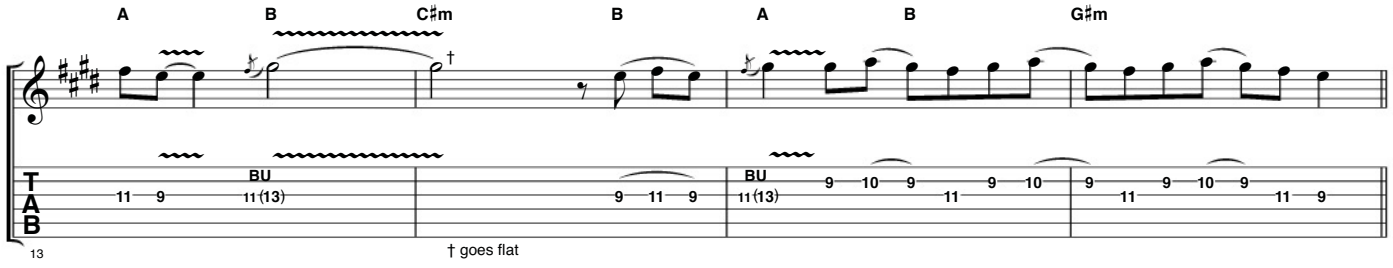
DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Bridge **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



Bars 3 and 4 use sliding 4th interval diads from the B major pentatonic scale (B C♯ D♯ F♯ G♯ – so all the notes are 'compatible' with the song's key of C♯ minor/E major). It can be tricky to execute these shapes at speed, so be sure to practise slowly at first.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Solo **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Solo (cont'd) **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

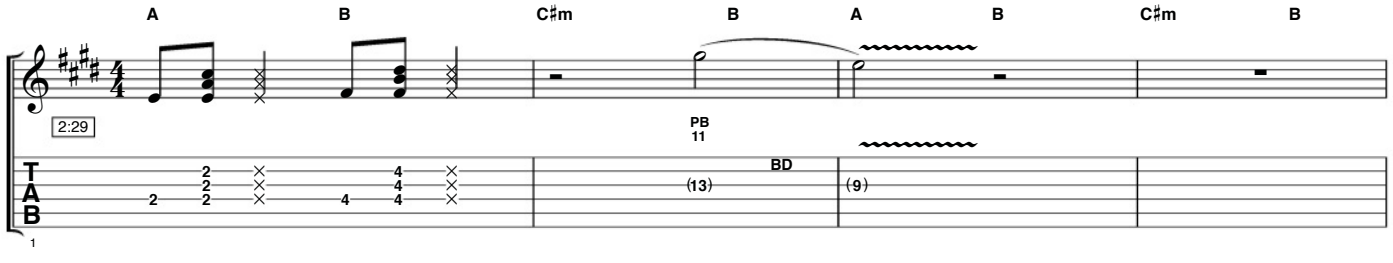


Reprising some licks from the intro, the solo steps up a gear from the mid-neck 'shape 4' pentatonic licks in the first eight bars to 'shape 1' higher up the neck from bar 9. Watch out for the fast, quirky vibrato in bar 6 which is best achieved with a fast shake of the fretting hand.

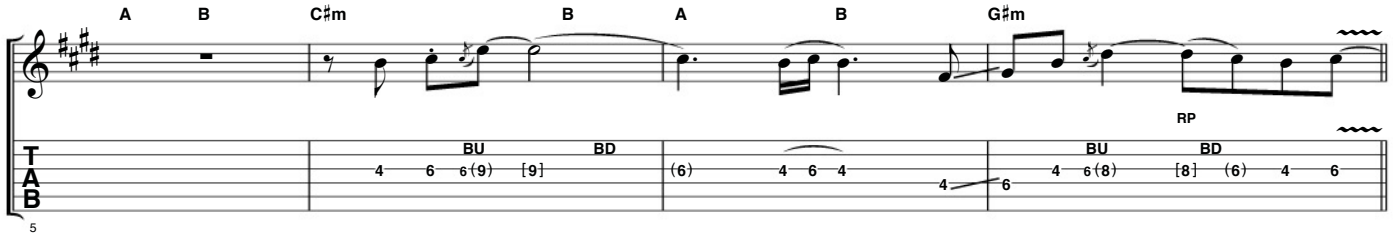
DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Chorus 3 **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

The descending lick in bar 3 is similar to the one in chorus 2, but starting higher up on a G♯ instead of an E to give more energy here.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 4 **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

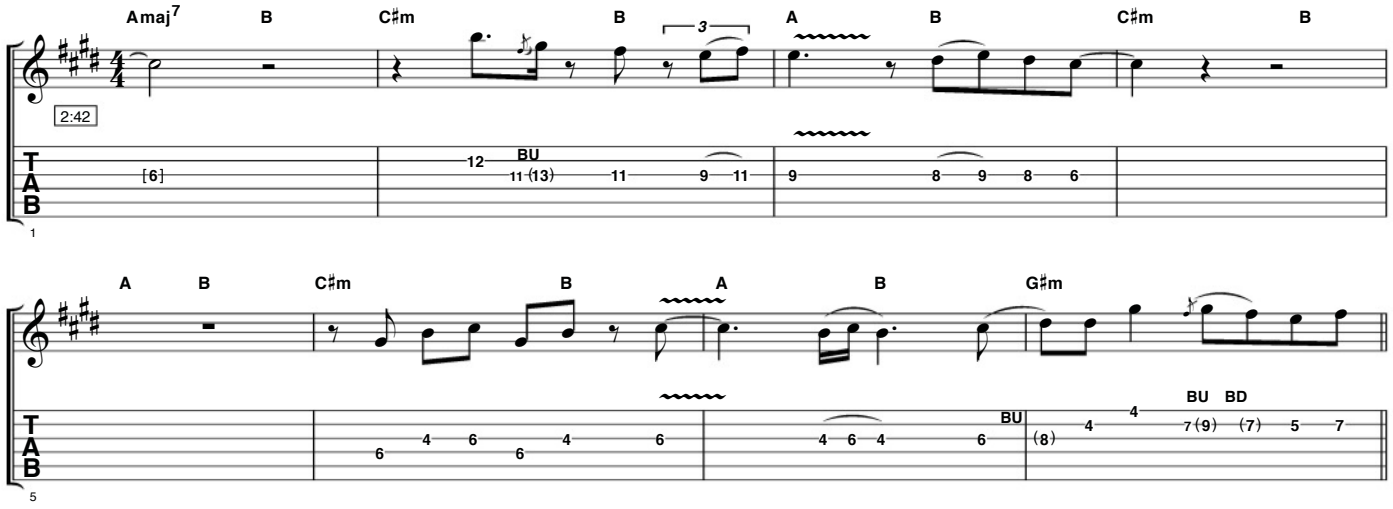


DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 4 (cont'd) **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



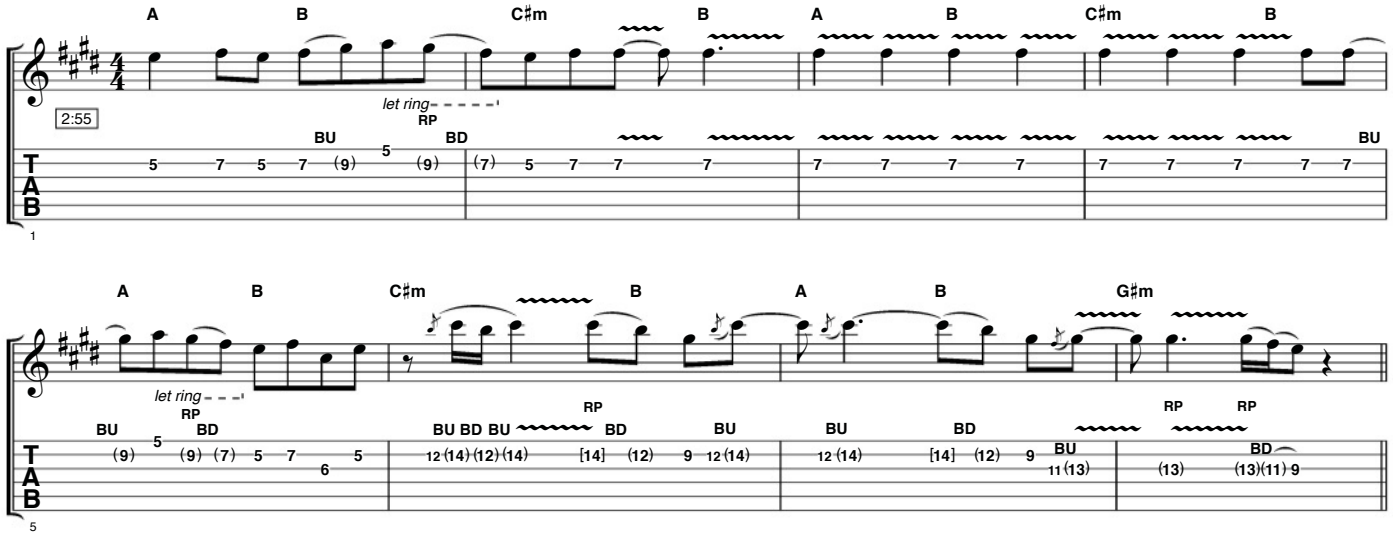
More question-and-answer-style licks to navigate here – Mark's blues roots coming through, perhaps? Watch out for the three-semitone minor 3rd bend in bar 6. A two-semitone bend would also work here if you prefer. Just make sure to hit one or the other – not in between!

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 5 **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



The end of verse 5 sees Mark beginning to rev things up as he leads into the final verse, itself a precursor to the rapid-fire outro solo. It's another example of Mark 'playing for the song' as he's gradually building up the energy long before the outro.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Verse 6 **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



Mark's vibrato in bars 2, 3 and 4 is fast and wide. The energy comes mostly from the fret hand though so be careful not to pick too hard. Of course, Mark is a fingerstylist, so we recommend playing the same way so that you have the maximum 'feel' for details like this.

DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Outro solo **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

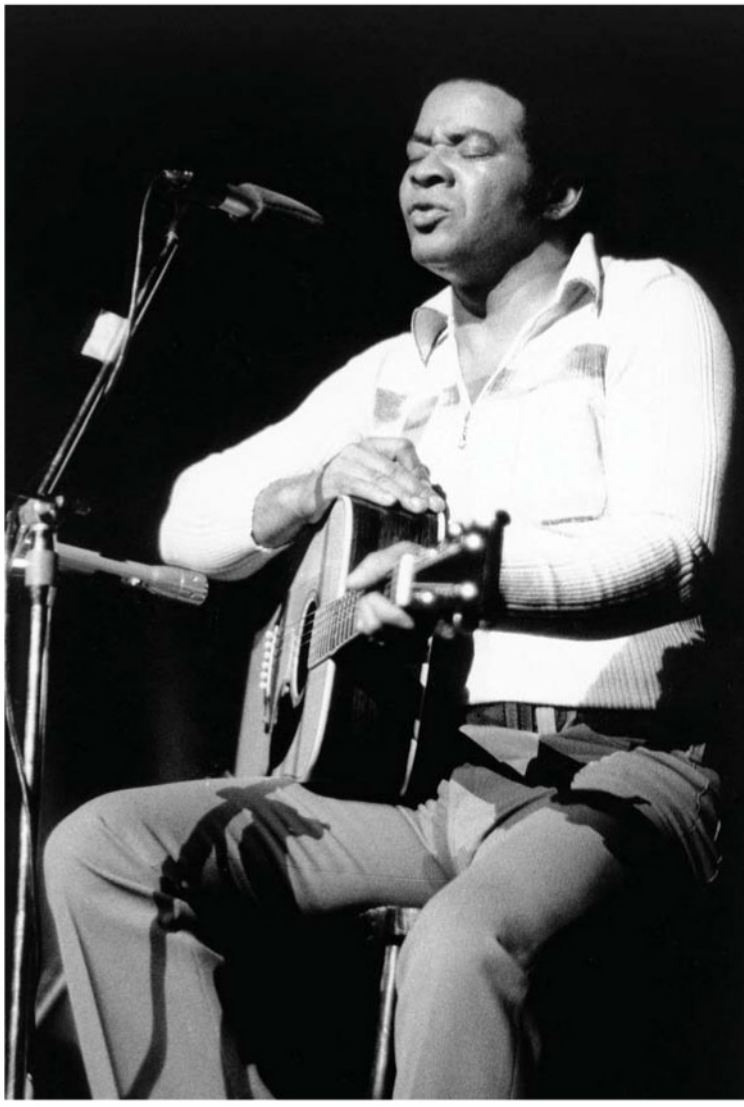
DIRE STRAITS LADY WRITER Outro solo (cont'd) **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

And here we arrive at a solo that must surely challenge *Sultans Of Swing* as Mark's most frenetic (though the two tracks are roughly the same tempo). Like *Sultans...*, the rapid-fire licks are built from a repeating pattern – but it's a two-bar-long widdly pattern that's takes some memorising, so make sure to spend some time practising it in bite-sized chunks.

BILL WITHERS
AIN'T NO SUNSHINE

From factory worker to hit maker; TG takes a look inside Rockschool's beginner arrangement of one of Bill Withers' finest...

Ain't No Sunshine was the breakthrough single release from Bill Withers' debut *Just As I Am*, produced by Booker T. Jones (of Booker T. and the M.G.'s). Many artists have cited Withers as a musical inspiration, with the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson dubbing him "a songwriter's songwriter". The mellow sound of *Ain't No Sunshine* comes from its A minor tonality, using chords built on the A natural minor scale: Am, G and Em. Note that the Em and G chords move relatively quickly (one chord per beat), repeatedly drawing us back to the tonal centre. This Debut-level Rockschool arrangement begins with a single-note line played on the fifth (A) and sixth (E) strings. Using your fretting hand, make sure that the remaining strings are muted so as not to get any unwanted resonance as you play these low notes. With your picking hand, aim for an even and clear tone, particularly when moving to the higher strings to play the E minor and D minor arpeggios in bars 6 and 7.



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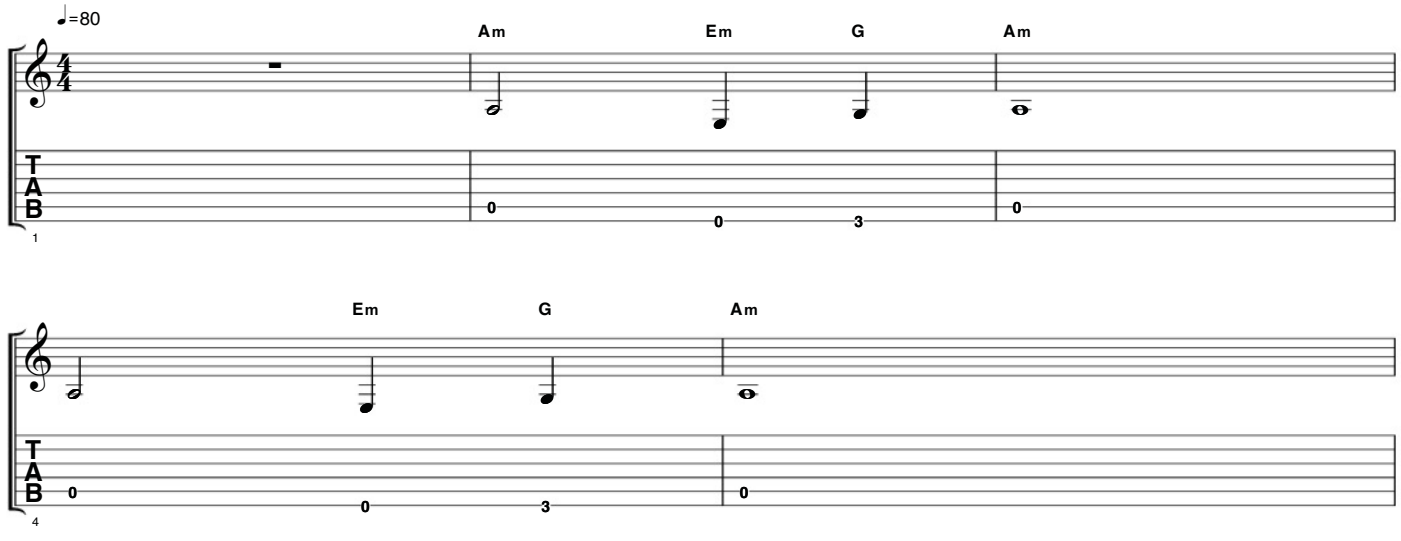
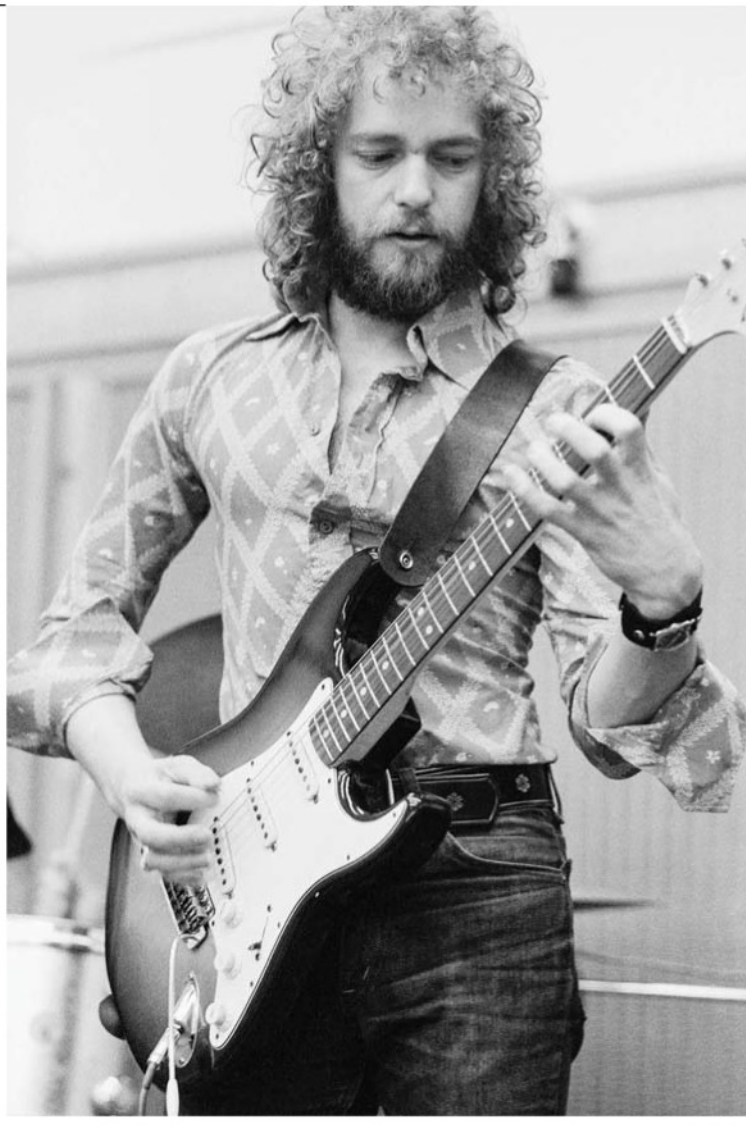
BILL WITHERS AIN'T NO SUNSHINE **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



Words Jono Harrison Photo Getty

BILL WITHERS AIN'T NO SUNSHINE **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**

Try to be accurate with the duration of notes, cutting them off with either the fretting or picking hand when required. The chords in bars 10 to 17 use different groups of strings, so be sure to only strike the strings shown in the tab for these.



OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

THIN LIZZY
WHISKEY IN THE JAR

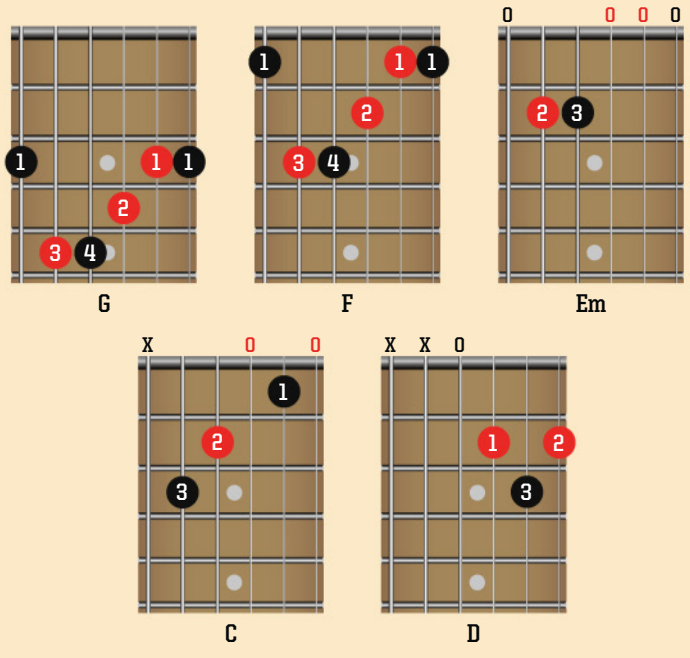
Get this 70s classic into your strum-along repertoire with TG's easy-to-follow lesson

By 1972, Thin Lizzy had already been going three years and had released two albums. However, they were showing little sign of scoring that elusive first hit single. That is until they dropped their version of traditional Irish tune *Whiskey In The Jar*. The song, which folklorists have traced back as far as the 17th century, is a tribute to a lovelorn Irish highwayman who robs a British army captain, only to later find his victim's been cavorting with his lady. While the ditty was a big Irish standard by the time Thin Lizzy came to cover it, no version had ever sounded anywhere near as rocky as their arrangement.

Guitarist Eric Bell used a Fender Stratocaster on the recording, but his thick tone is the result of double-tracking and using a Leslie cabinet. Try using a phaser pedal with a wah set to a static position to get close to the tone. And, of course, it's a great acoustic strum-along type of tune with just a handful of simple chords to follow. Everything you need to know is below.

CHORDS

The chords of C, D and Em are all basic open-chord shapes suitable for players of all levels. Strike only four strings for the D chord, five strings for the C and all six strings for the Em. G and F are both 'E shape' barre chords (so called because they are based on an open E chord shape, but with an added first-finger barre). Make sure to press down with your barring finger firmly and close to the fret for the cleanest possible sound.



WHISKEY IN THE JAR
Words and Music by Philip Parris Lynott, Brian Michael Downey and Eric Bell
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Guitars and backing Damien Morris **Photo** Getty

BACKING TRACK (BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

Whiskey In The Jar

Intro
G F Em / / / G / / / F Em / / / G / / /

Verse 1
G
As I was goin' over
Em
The Cork and Kerry mountains
C
I saw Captain Farrell
G
And his money he was countin'

I first produced my pistol
Em
And then produced my rapier
C
I said, "Stand and deliver
G
Or the devil, he may take you"

Chorus
D
Mush-a ring, dum-a doo-dam-a-da
C
Whack for my daddy-o

Whack for my daddy-o
G
There's whiskey in the jar-o

Repeat intro

Verse 2
G
I took all of his money
Em
And it was a pretty penny
C
I took all of his money
G
And I brought it home to Molly

She swore that she'd love me
Em
Never would she leave me
C
But the devil take that woman
G
For you know she tricked me easy

Repeat chorus

Guitar solo
F Em / / / G / / / Em / / / C / / /
G / / / / / / / Em / / / C / / /
G / / / D / / / C / / / / / / / G / / /

Repeat intro

Verse 3
G
Being drunk and weary
Em
I went to Molly's chamber
C
Takin' my Molly with me
G
And I never knew the danger

For about six or maybe seven
Em
In walked Captain Farrell
C
I jumped up, fired off my pistols
G
And I shot him with both barrels

Repeat chorus

Repeat intro

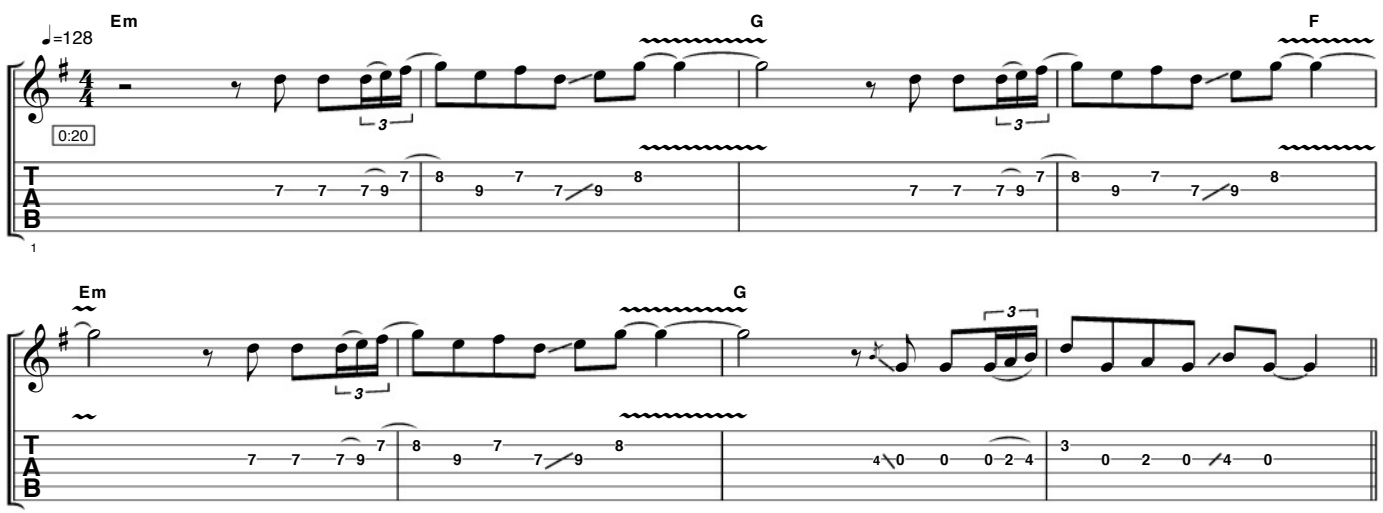
Verse 4
G
Now some men like the fishin'
Em
And some men like the fowlin'
C
And some men like to hear
G
The cannon ball a-roarin'

And me, I like sleepin'
Em
'Specially in my Molly's chamber
C
But here I am in prison
G
Here I am with a ball and chain yeah

Repeat chorus

Outro
F Em G F Em
And I got drunk on whiskey
G
And I loved, I loved, I loved, I loved
F Em G
I loved, I loved my Molly
F Em
And you know you'll never
G
But I will burn it down
F Em
I'll burn it all down

THIN LIZZY WHISKEY IN THE JAR Lead riff **BIT.LY/TG368AUDIO**



This is probably the most famous lead line in the track. It's based in 7th position, which means your first finger plays the 7th fret notes. Break out of 7th position, though, and slide into the 9th fret with your second finger in bar 2. It's a tricky fingering, but it keeps you in the best position throughout.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION
Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS
We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

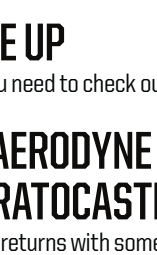
***WHAT IS GAS?**
Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL
You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS
We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD
TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out



PLATINUM AWARD
Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

SUPERB, A BEST BUY | EXCELLENT | ABOVE AVERAGE KIT | SOME ISSUES | POOR

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Legendary high gain amp sound in a stompbox

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

PRS SONZERA 20

1 The company's Fender-flavoured 1x12 combo has returned to the lineup again and it's a welcome comeback; a two-channel proposition offering the flexibility for players to use the second for a boosted clean or heavier distortion, with onboard spring reverb further sweetening the deal. "I am very happy to re-release the new Sonzera 20 combo with improved construction techniques, refined voicing, and fresh cosmetics," says designer Doug Sewell.

£995
www.prsguitars.com

IBANEZ PENTATONE PREAMP

2 This is absolutely not another Tube Screamer, instead this distortion pedal is a deep-drive into EQ, post- and pre-boost parameter tweaking. A five-band parametric LED-lit EQ beckons the tone tweakers, and a two-footswitch control activates the preamp bypass and post-boost. It says a lot about the current norm for premium overdrive pedals that we expected this one to have a higher price tag, especially given it has a built-in noise gate.

£179
www.ibanez.com

FENDER LIMITED EDITION H.E.R. STRATOCASTER

3 Available only in 2023, this special edition version of H.E.R.'s signature Strat features a Blue Marlin finish inspired by fishing trips the R&B musician took with her father. The guitar makes the most of it with a matching headstock for its one-piece maple neck with '60s C-shape carve. Other spec details include 9.5" radius and 21 vintage-tall frets, alder body, vintage-style six-point tremolo and Noiseless pickups.

£1,199
www.fender.com

IBANEZ FRH10N

4 Tim Henson's TOD10N signature brought back Ibanez's SC500N model blueprint from 1998 for a new audience. A nylon-string with electric guitar dimensions, this non-signature version offers the same soundhole on the upper bout with a more utilitarian look in Natural Flat or Brown Sunburst Flat with a solid Sitka spruce top and sapele back and sides. A nyatoh C-shape neck and walnut fretboard with Ibanez T-Bar undersaddle piezo makes this a unique and affordable addition to a guitar collection.

£429 (ETA April)
www.ibanez.com

CATALINBREAD FORMULA 51

5 The latest addition to the Portland company's Formula amp-in-a-pedal family focuses on the '50s Fender Tweed Champ – so it's time to dust off those Neil Young riffs. With Sag, Tone, Volume and Gain, you actually get more controls here than the original amps have, all plus a preamp, power amp sim and output transformer all squeezed in too. The Tone control's mid scoop is inspired by the framus Cobra to bring some Blackface-esque added EQ versatility.

£151.55
www.catalinbread.com

FENDER AERODYNE SPECIAL STRATOCASTER

£1349

The futuristic Fender returns with some notable upgrades – and it's better than ever

The Stratocaster design is one of the most iconic six-string templates in history. Indeed, throughout the decades, it's been the instrument of choice for countless guitarists, and to this day is the benchmark for many brands – PRS and Ibanez included – seeking to capture some of that Strat magic. Owing to this heritage, it's little surprise the Stratocaster has been the recipient of very few radical design overhauls. Even Fender's latest big release, the American Vintage II line, was all about harnessing history. Yes, certain specs have changed over the years, but overall the Stratocaster has remained a relatively static six-string.

That's what makes the new made in Japan Aerodyne Special Stratocaster so – for want of a better word – special. It's a Strat, but it's a Strat like you've never seen, or heard, before. First introduced in the mid 2000s, the flagship Aerodyne range dipped its toes into modern waters, testing out new specs, aesthetics and tones. The new-for-2022 reboot – complete with HSS/SSS Strats, a Telecaster and Precision and Jazz Basses – pushes that boat out even further.

The result is a Strat unlike anything else currently on the Big F's books. It's familiar to hold, but the slimmer basswood body makes it really light, whereas its bound top ditches smooth contours for rigid edges. This does put slightly more pressure on the forearm, but it's really nothing to worry about, and the deep reverse contour and sleek body carve more than compensate for this.

Another notable difference is the neck and fretboard. The rosewood 'board is a Strat stalwart, but the 12" radius isn't, and it makes this particular guitar far more accommodating. With the help of the modern C maple neck, the guitar is a dream to get around: the neck is faultless, with no fret edge issues whatsoever, and the action is perfectly adjusted for effortless chording and lithe string jumping.

> "NO OTHER FENDER BEHAVES QUITE LIKE IT"

Functionally speaking, the spec sheet overhaul isn't just for show: the Babicz Z-Series FCH 2-Point tremolo is a great addition. Supremely responsive to both whole note pull-ups and borderline divebombs, the floating tremolo unlocks some flexible bending feats – something the original six-screw bridge-equipped Aerodynes couldn't deliver.

Not only that, the Babicz is really comfortable underneath the pick hand. Unlike bent steel saddles which can tear up the strumming hand, the smoothly contoured Babicz saddles are far superior. They're even better than block saddles, owing to their rounded edges.

1 PICKUPS
Created just for this release, the Aerodyne Special single-coils are fresh but familiar, capable of some nice vintage tones when pushed to the edge and cutting gains when cranked.

2 BRIDGE
The Babicz Z-Series tremolo is drafted in over a Fender alternative, but its appointment is a welcome one. Not only is it robustly set up and capable of some impressive feats of tremolo action, it's also really comfortable for the pick hand to rest on.

3 FRETS AND FRETBOARD
Faultlessly crafted and easy to navigate, the modern-C maple neck and 12" rosewood fretboard combo plays like a match made in heaven. Accommodating to chords, bends and soloing alike, the neck and slimmer body help facilitate an especially playable Strat.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Basswood

NECK: Maple

SCALE: 25.5"

FINGERBOARD: Rosewood, 12" radius

FRETS: 22, Medium Jumbo

PICKUPS: 3 x Aerodyne Special Single-Coil Stratocaster

CONTROLS: Master Volume, Tone 1 (Neck/Middle), Tone 2 (Bridge)

HARDWARE: Babicz Z-Series FCH-2 Point Trem, Deluxe Locking Tuners

FINISH: Chocolate Burst, Bright White, California Blue

CONTACT: Fender, www.fender.com

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Photography Olly Curtis

Strat To The Future

The Aerodyne gets its most striking upgrade yet

In 2004, Fender unveiled the Aerodyne Stratocaster for the very first time. Made in Japan, the first few models flipped Fender's Strat aesthetic on its head, offering carved bound black bodies and color-matched headstocks, though retained some heritage with three-ply pickguards, 7.25"-radius fingerboards and six-screw tremolos. In 2005, a more radical model arrived, doubling down on its aggressive appearance by ditching the pickguard and offering a side-mounted jack output.

Up until last year, the Aerodynes arrived in numerous forms exclusive to the Japanese market: some classically styled with flame maple tops and white pickguards, others with spacey block colourways. This latest one is by far the most "modern", available in previously unobtainable finishes and offering specs new to the range. For the first time, 12" radius fretboards are on tap, with that Babicz bridge delivering ultimate sustain, playability and comfort. Previous models did flash DiMarzios, though, which might have given these Aerodyne single-coils a run for their money...

Comfort and response aside, the Babicz drives the guitar's immense natural sustain. This bridge's Full-Contact Hardware design – which increases contact between saddle and bridge for brighter overall tone – isn't just snake oil. Unplugged, the guitar is incredibly dynamic. Plugged in, it sings.

Having said that, because the Babicz design is so noticeably responsive, the slightest unintentional pressure when palm-muting or plucking can throw the tuning out. If tamed, this lends itself to some cool hands-free bending potential, or you can just throw an extra few springs on the block and eradicate the quirk entirely. To that end, the presence of Deluxe locking tuners – along with the synthetic bone nut – helps maintain robust tuning stability.

Tonally speaking, it's nicely diverse. Boasting a trio of all-new Aerodyne Special single-coils, the guitar is capable of both snappy Strat sounds when balanced on the edge of breakup and some impressively cutting gains when cranked. Scooped slightly in the mids, they're all nicely responsive to their respective tone pots, with the five-way switch helping navigate an impressive collection of Fender sounds, and then some. They're also noticeably dynamic – something the overall build probably helps with – and particularly sensitive to pick attack.

The control set is nothing new, but the usual control tips have been replaced by smaller all-silver alternatives. These play into the aesthetics of the Aerodyne, but practically aren't as intuitive. Once accustomed to the model's sound and response, this is less of any issue, but one that needs overcoming nonetheless. Plus, the lack of friction or knurling make rolling adjustments a tad more laborious. Again, it's a minor gripe for a guitar that otherwise excels in tone, build quality, hardware and performance.

Sounds and feel aside, this really is a beautiful Strat with looks to match its resonant and dynamic character. Sleek and elegant with the perfect marriage of modern playability with timeless Strat tones and feel, this might be the best Aerodyne yet. Perhaps even more impressively, no other Fender we can think of behaves quite like it. Translation: pick it up and you'll struggle to put it down.

Matt Owen

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

ALSO TRY...

FENDER AMERICAN ULTRA STRATOCASTER £2059

If it's a modern-spec'd Strat you're after, the American Ultra deserves a shout. A two-point trem, compound radius and Ultra Noiseless single-coils packaged in a vintage aesthetic, it's the best new "old" Strat money can buy.

FENDER TOM MORELLO STRATOCASTER £1409

Morello's Strat is just an Aerodyne at heart, with a few drastic modifications such as the silver pickguard and Floyd Rose trem that give it its own spice.

PRS SE SILVER SKY £895

When John Mayer and PRS teamed up, they sought to bring the Strat design into the modern era. In that spirit, it shares a common goal with the Aerodyne, and delivers some inspired specs.

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GRETSCH ROOTS COLLECTION G9500 JIM DANDY

£205

A good ol' fashioned, rootsy strummer

Think of an acoustic guitar, and you'll probably be imagining a dreadnought with a spruce top, mahogany or rosewood back and sides – the quintessential all-round strummer. But, the Jim Dandy from Gretsch flies in the face of this recipe, instead offering up a retro-inspired, small-bodied parlor guitar.

Thanks to this and the small-ish price tag, the Gretsch Jim Dandy has long been a favourite among those looking for an inexpensive acoustic guitar that still has some personality. But since Gretsch has issued it in the tasty-looking Nocturne Blue finish pictured (alongside a Sapele-bodied Frontier Stain version), now is a good time to revisit it.

Build-wise, the limited edition model we have for review is the same as the current regular models. That is, a basswood top, back and sides, accompanied by a C-shaped, nato neck which meets the 95mm-deep body at the 12th fret, and a black walnut fingerboard at a 24-inch scale length. All of this adds up to an acoustic that sits between a three-quarter and full-sized acoustic, making it a great option for kids and adults alike.

There's no getting way from the retro design: open-gear tuners, pin-less, top-loaded bridge, vintage-style scratchplate – it feels like it should come with a copy of Bert Weedon's *Play In A Day*. But all this means nothing if it doesn't play well and sound good.

As we take ours out of its box, it's noticeable that the Nocturne Blue doesn't just look good in the photos, and if you're worried about those tuners being a bit *Meccano*, you'll be pleased to hear that the Jim Dandy turned up with its tuning almost perfectly intact.

The action is low without buzz, and it's well intonated across the neck. But if you're used to sprawling out you might find the reduced scale to be a little bit cramped, particularly when playing open chords. Tonally, it's as you might expect. Obviously the reduction in body size also means that it's not going to have the bass and resonance levels of a standard dreadnought. It's bright but not brash when strummed, and fingerpicked notes have a definite 'pluck' to them, with a strong attack and slightly reduced sustain. But what it lacks in boom, it makes up for with projection, with the ability to be surprisingly loud with a pokey frequency response when you hit it hard.

There aren't many acoustic guitars that are this much fun, and even fewer from respected names at this price point. The lack of electronics mean you're likely to pass on the Jim Dandy if you want a gigging guitar (see the Gretsch Gin Rickey for that). But as a play-at-home strummer, campfire traveller or a good quality first acoustic guitar for younger folk, the Jim Dandy has still got it.

Stuart Williams

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
PLAYABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

1 LIMITED EDITION FINISH
The Nocturne Blue finish is limited edition, adding a contemporary look to the otherwise retro Jim Dandy.

2 RETRO HARDWARE
The open gear tuners, bridge, plus the flat top design, give this guitar an old school feel, while the truss rod cover proudly announces the 'steel reinforced neck'!

3 SMALL-SCALE STRUMMER
At 24 inches, the scale length makes this the ideal guitar for younger players and adults alike.

AT A GLANCE

TOP: Basswood
BACK AND SIDES: Basswood
NECK: Nato
FINGERBOARD: Black walnut
FRETS: 18
SCALE: 24-inch
HARDWARE: Die-cast Gretsch vintage-style
LEFT-HANDED: No
CONTACT: Fender EMEA, 01342 332450
WEB: Gretsch, www.gretschguitars.com

Photography Olly Curtis

BOSS

BOSS KATANA-50 MKII EX 1X12 COMBO

£345

The next evolution of Boss' best-selling amp has arrived

Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

There's plenty of reasons why Boss's Katana digital modelling amps have become so popular; one of the most obvious being they're astonishing value for money, packing in highly realistic amp tones alongside boutique-grade effects at prices that seem almost too good to be true. Following its debut in 2016 alongside the acclaimed Waza Craft Head, the Katana range rapidly grew to include Artist, Mini and Air (wireless) options, with a widely-acclaimed Mark II upgrade that added extra voices and effects.

Now, Boss have given their best-selling Katana-50 MkII combo yet another upgrade and called it the Katana-50 MkII EX. 'EX' stands for Expanded and that's essentially what's going on here. The same Katana features we've come to love are still there, with five dual-voiced amp types and over 65 built-in effects that provide a great mix of essential and funky boutique virtual stompboxes to play with.

The new EX version keeps the same reassuringly familiar knobs and switches, while adding a Power Amp In jack for connecting external modelling preamps, a cabinet-simulated Line Out jack and a socket for the GA-FC foot controller, letting you access saved tone settings as well as switching individual effects and toggling the solo level boost. From the GA-FC you can add footswitches together with expression pedals for volume swells, wah and pitch-bending effects.

Add a second Katana-50 MkII and you can also expand your tone into the stereo domain, with the GA-FC EX controller running both amps simultaneously. Stereo effects bring the Katana into a different league; for example if you want to experience proper chorus it has to be in stereo; Roland popularised the chorus effect, first using it in the JC-120 Jazz Chorus amplifier, before transplanting the analogue electronics into the legendary Boss CE-1 Chorus ensemble, way back in 1976. The Katana-50 MkII EX's sounds are even more impressive in stereo, especially the chorus, which accurately recreates the spatially-shifted ambient magic of the original.

> "IN TODAY'S MARKET, IT'S PRACTICALLY UNBEATABLE"

Apart from the lack of an effects loop, it's really hard to find fault with the EX; the spookily valve-like Tube Logic sounds are highly responsive – our favourites are both variations of the versatile Crunch voice and the Waza-approved Brown Sound for scorching leads. Meanwhile the re-vamped Tone Studio partner app lets you save patches and explore the Katana's secret custom settings, including comprehensive parametric and graphic EQ options.

From beginners to seasoned professionals, the Katana-50 MkII EX has something to offer for everyone – EX might stand for expanded, but could easily mean exciting and exhilarating, not to mention offering extra bang for your buck. In today's competitive market, it's practically unbeatable.

Nick Guppy

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

1 LEVEL CONTROLS AND REVERB KNOB
The Katana's effects level controls use space-saving dual-concentric knobs, with a separate level control for the built-in reverb. There's also a useful tap tempo button.

2 AMP TYPE SELECT KNOB
The Katana-50 MKII EX features five amp types with five variations, making ten distinct voices to choose from, including ones optimised for acoustic intruments.

3 GA-FC EX FOOT CONTROLLER
The rear-connecting GA-FC EX foot controller lets you access saved patches, turn individual effects on and off, and add expression pedals and extra footswitches.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Digital modelling, 50-watt 1x12" combo amp

CHANNELS: Five amp voices and five variations, 4 programmable patches in 2 banks of 2

OUTPUT: 50 watts RMS class AB output stage, switchable to 25 watts, 0.5 watts and Standby for silent recording

SOCKETS: Single input jack, cabinet-simulated line out, power amp in, headphones/recording output, aux input, USB type 'B' for recording and connection to desktop Tone Studio app

WEIGHT: 11.7kg

DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 470 x 398 x 238mm

FINISH: Black vinyl with black speaker grille

CONTACT: Boss, www.boss.info/uk/

Photography Olly Curtis

SOLDANO SUPER LEAD OVERDRIVE

Legendary high-gain amp sound in a stompbox

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

£229

The Soldano Super Lead Overdrive hand-wired valve amp has gained quite a reputation for setting the standard for high-gain guitar amplification, and not just among the plethora of metal and hard rock players who've played through it either, as Eric Clapton and Mark Knopfler have been among its users since its introduction in 1987.

Superstar guitarists of course would have no trouble affording the best part of four grand needed to purchase the 100-watt head, but for the rest of us the good news is that Soldano has now brought out the SLO pedal, which aims to deliver that signature sound with whatever amp you may be using.

With looks that reflect the original amp's control surface, the pedal gives you Volume and Gain knobs and the same EQ options – a trio of Treble, Middle and Bass knobs that can sculpt the sound nicely to your taste, plus a Presence knob that focusses the overall top-end crispness that really lets the sound cut through. Besides these, there's a 'Deep' button on the side of the pedal that you can push in to add some low end *whomp*.

With the Gain knob at zero, there's plenty of Volume knob leeway to give your amp a real kick with an edgy boost. But it's the dirt that this pedal is about, and you get into some solid crunch tones in the lower reaches of the Gain knob, moving into more saturated territory as you advance with those cascading gain stages working their magic. With outstanding touch-sensitivity, it's a joy to play – with a full-fat sustaining sound laden with harmonics under your fingertips.

A great source of hi-gain, amp-like drive and distortion – if you've coveted an SLO head, here's a more affordable way to get some Soldano into your rig.

Trevor Curwen

AT A GLANCE

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Drive pedal

FEATURES: True bypass

CONTROLS: Volume, Presence, Gain, Treble, Middle, Bass, Deep switch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 32mA

DIMENSIONS: 66 (w) x 113 (d) x 53 mm (h)

CONTACT: Andertons, www.andertons.co.uk

> "IF YOU'VE COVETED AN SLO HEAD, HERE'S A GREAT WAY TO GET SOME SOLDANO INTO YOUR RIG"

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

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The MS-2 is a one-watt micro amp that delivers true Marshall tone with a belt clip that means it can be taken and played anywhere you like.

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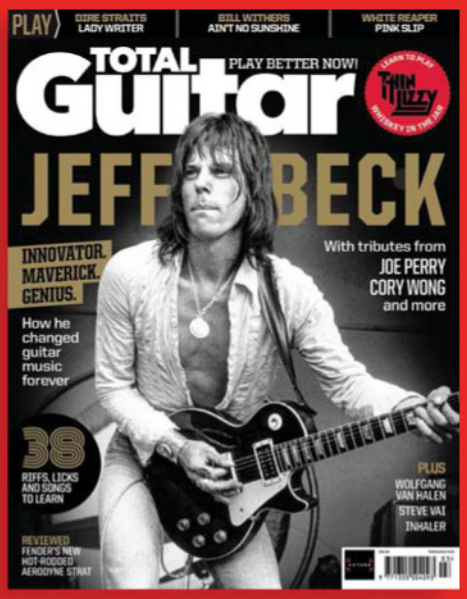
Even though it's small, it packs a punch and includes an overdrive channel for that dirty crunch.

Its ¼-inch headphone socket can double up as a preamp out, so you can play in a variety of environments.



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Words Ellie Rogers

DADDY LONG LEGS

Described as 'New York City's most diabolical rhythm and blues street gang', Daddy Long Legs look and sound every bit the city that spawned them. The trio's new album takes its title *Street Sermons* title from time spent disturbing the peace on New York street corners with busked sets of their raucous blues-abilly rock 'n' roll tunes. "We worked backwards from The New York Dolls covering Bo Diddley," explains guitarist Murat Aktürk, who first became enchanted by NYC's legendary punk scene, before finding a love and talent for blues music.

Delivered at full throttle and full volume, Aktürk's primal chops salute blues originators like Lightnin' Hopkins and Elmore James, or – as he puts it - "a range of guys with different levels of proficiency." A four-piece, also with vocals, harmonicas, "tribal beats" and piano, the band has been a bass-free zone since day one, leaving Aktürk to "pick up the slack" in a role that traverses rhythm, slide, lead and nifty low-end lines played in open G – AKA the Keith Richards tuning. "I keep all six strings on there, unlike Keith who takes off the low E," he explains. "I have to work harder and I use that to do little bass runs."

Guitar-wise, Aktürk's favourites include a Mexican Shell Pink '72 Reissue Thinline Telecaster with wide range humbuckers, and a black Zemaitis acoustic complete with heart-shaped soundhole. A fan of resonant hollow-bodies, he also uses Godin 5th Avenue Kingpin and Nightclub models to bring classic tones howling into a much rowdier context. Pointing to his number one - the single P-90 equipped Kingpin - he laughs: "It's supposed to be a jazz guitar but it's a loud, screaming feedback guitar! I was looking for something like a Gibson ES-125 but, besides being expensive, I feel bad beating up vintage guitars."

He runs his "naturally relic-ed" modern collection through a Fender Blues Deluxe, utilising the amp's own drive channel for grit. An MXR Carbon Copy provides "a little slapback delay at all times," while other pedals that get used for "maybe a fraction of a song" include a fuzz, tremolo and an octave to compensate for that lack of bass.

In the studio, another low-end revelation hit when Aktürk unlocked the potential of baritone guitars, pairing a Fender Bass VI with a Fuzz Face for some truly gnarly tones. A Danelectro Baritone also lent its trademark throatiness and extended scale to the stand-out slide solo on *Been A Fool Once*. "There's so much neck to work with, so there's some really long slides," enthuses Aktürk. "It kind of blew my own mind!"

FAST AS F#!

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Distortion
DS-1w

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